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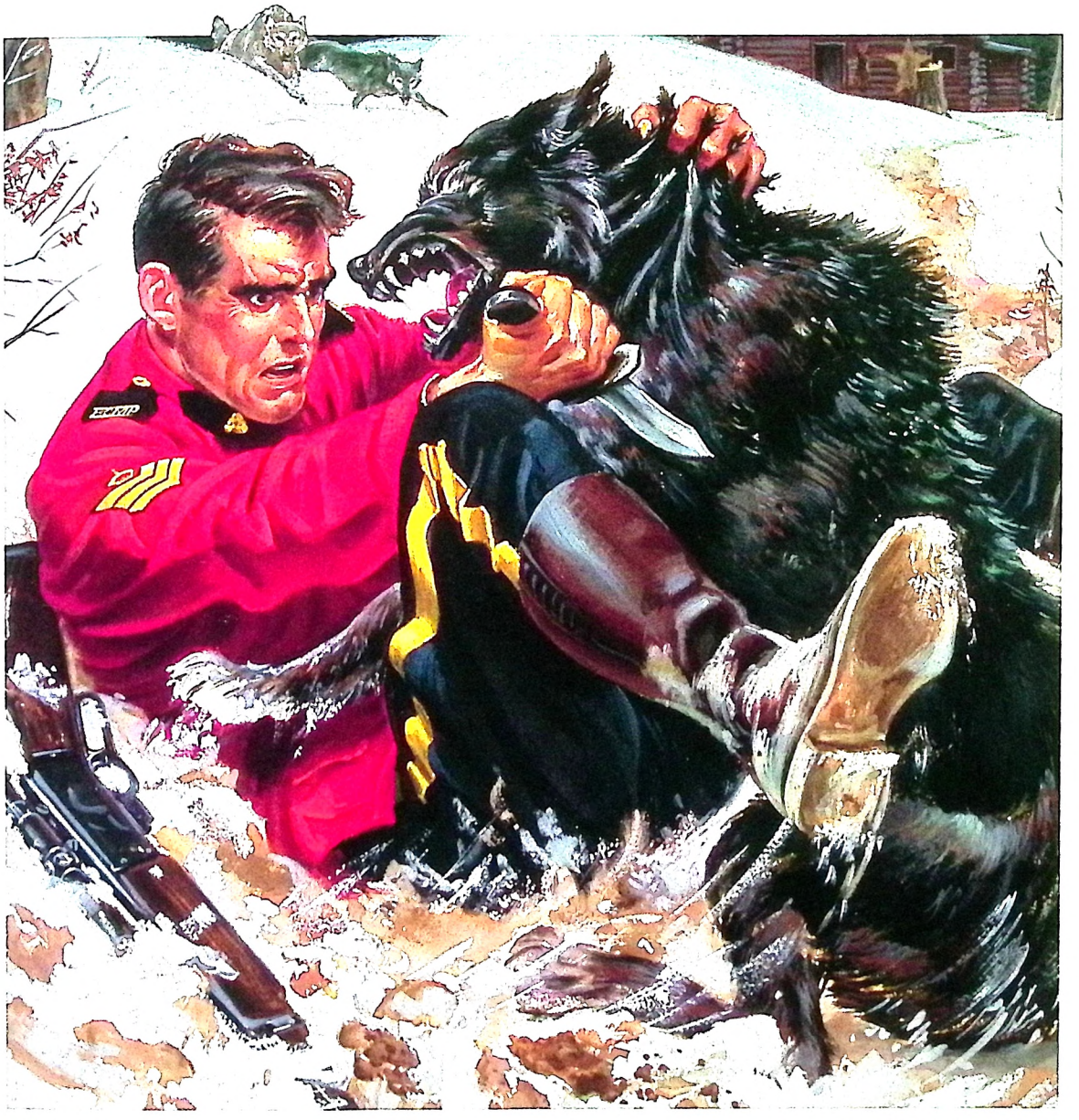

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Gouache on board, 13" x 16.5"

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Illustration

VOLUME TWO, ISSUE NUMBER EIGHT / OCTOBER 2003

Contents

4 The Art of Ernest "Darcy" Chiriacka
by David Saunders

36 The Artists of Aurora
by Thomas Graham

52 An Interview with William George
by Daniel Zimmer

78 Book Reviews
by J. Barry Dwyer and Brian M. Kane

80 Exhibitions and Events

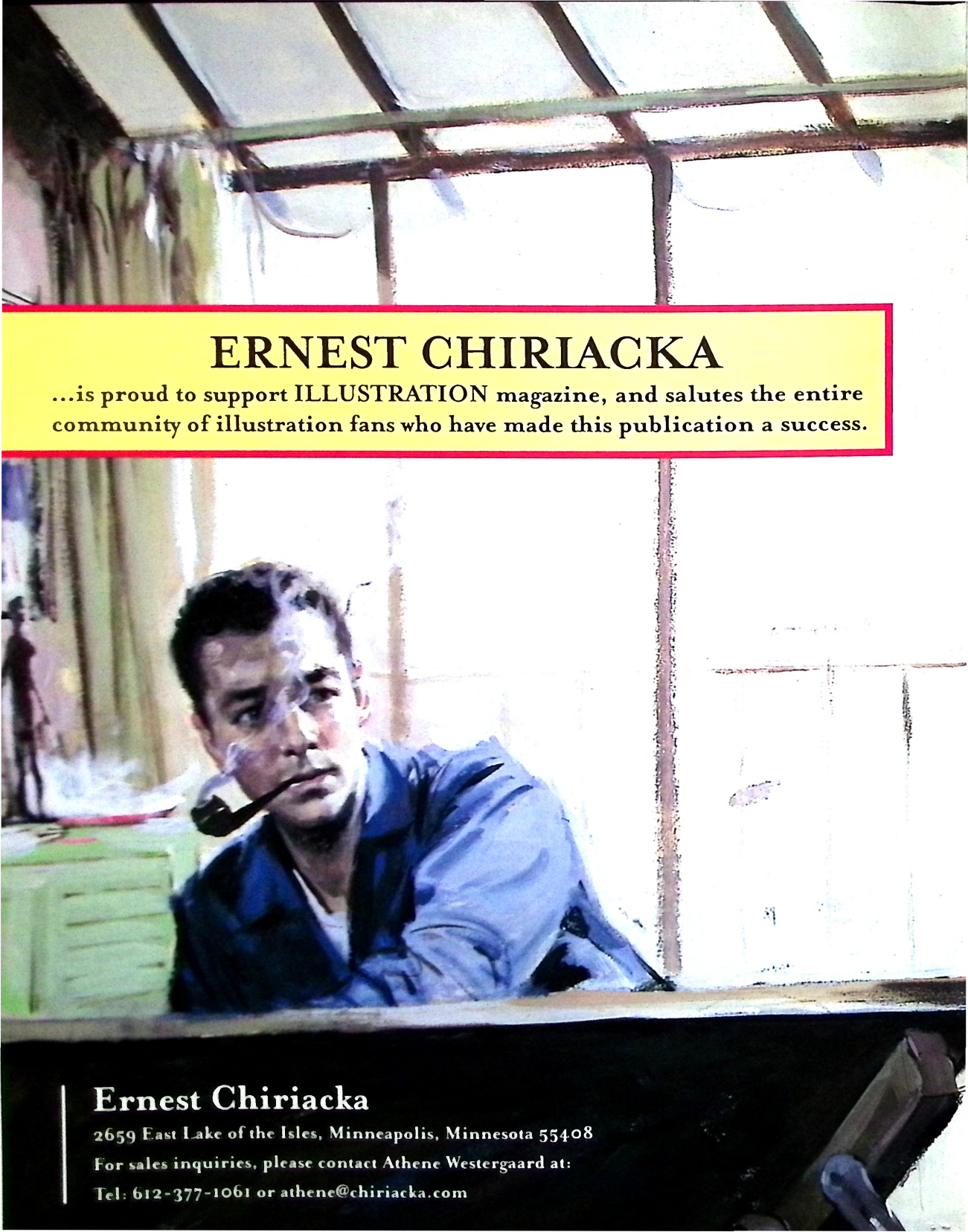
From the Editor...

This issue has something for everyone. From pin-ups and model kit box art, to pulp magazines and slicks, to paperbacks, Western subjects, and fine art—all are represented in our pages in generous helpings. I think this one is impossible to top, and I hope you agree! The many advertisers and contributors who have continued to support this magazine have my utmost thanks and gratitude, and as I've said before, without all of you this magazine could not exist. Special thanks to David Saunders, who never ceases to amaze me with his discoveries, scholarship, and enthusiasm; to Thomas Graham for his wonderful second installment of the model kit series; and to Ernest Chiriacka and William George, two outstanding gentlemen who have done so much to enliven the field of commercial illustration. Their work is an inspiration to me, and I hope you will take delight in learning more about them both.

Please help to support this magazine by subscribing today. Ask for the magazine at your local bookstore or newsstand, and tell your local library to subscribe. If you are an art student, be sure to tell the school librarian about the magazine and encourage them to sign up. I want to continue growing and making the magazine better, and your help in this is essential and greatly appreciated!

For those of you who have been waiting on the Reynold Brown book, never fear... work is progressing daily! Stay tuned for more news soon!

Dan Zimmer, Publisher



ERNEST CHIRIACKA

...is proud to support ILLUSTRATION magazine, and salutes the entire community of illustration fans who have made this publication a success.

Ernest Chiriacka

2659 East Lake of the Isles, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55408

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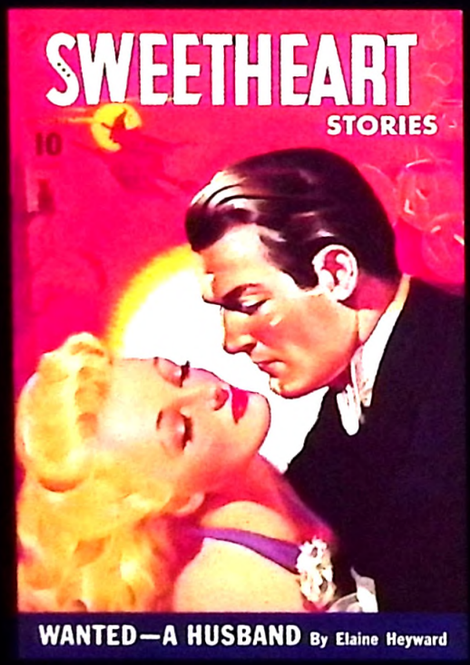
Detective Fiction Weekly, October 1943

Dime Western Magazine, July 1945

Detective Tales, July 1946

.44 Western Magazine, July 1942



Sweetheart Stories, October 1942

Rodeo Romances, August 1942

Dime Detective Magazine, February 1946

Fifteen Western Tales, November 1943

The Phantom Detective, April 1945

The Art of
Ernest "Darcy" Chiriacka

by David Saunders

INTRODUCTION TO AN ANONYMOUS PULP ARTIST

A stunning articulate splash, a flashing gun barrel, and a cool-headed handsome cowboy, grimly taking a flesh-wound as he spins to fire, true and steady, at a shadowy bushwhacker. Each line is painted with a graceful command that flows from the brush of a distinctive draftsman. The composition has a dynamic sweep and the exciting colors are tastefully arranged. The cast of characters in the painted scene are beaming with the stage-presence of Hollywood stars. The artist's temperament is intelligent, easy-going, and dignified. The style is recognizable, but—the pulp is not signed. The artist's skills are as accomplished as a slicks illustrator moonlighting anonymously in the pulps, but who is this guy? Out of admiration, I began to collect his covers five years ago, and I soon found so many examples from the 1940s that I suspect he was among the most prolific pulp artists of that era. So who is he? I had found over 500 sensational pulp covers painted by this same confident hand, and they all have the same mysterious trait.... there is no signature. Time and again, with each new-found example, the enigma became even more unsettling. How could such a talented and successful artist be unrecognized in the history of 20th Century American illustration? It's difficult to research an unknown artist, but if it isn't done now, it'll never get any easier. "Who *is* this guy?" I had to find out.

Ernest "Darcy" Chiriacka, c. 1940s

My father was the illustrator Norman Saunders, so I was lucky to grow up within a circle of his remarkable compatriots and competitors. They all seemed like uncles to me, so my interest in studying this field is not entirely aesthetic. It's also a sentimental thrill to learn about their world of the pulps, to learn more about their lives, and to identify their individual styles and personalities. Pulp covers were low paying freelance jobs ($60-$150), so to keep afloat most artists worked for several competing publishers, and that rivalry led artists to work incognito. Dad said it didn't matter because, "All the professionals in the business already know each other's style. Our work *is* our signature." Like those old pros, I can recognize all of my "uncles" from a mile away. Along with those family friends, I can also visually identify most of the pulp illustrators from the 1940s, but my knowledge of this period is incomplete if I can't even name this artist. I believe "the cream" does rise to the top in the world of art, so this guy should be as well-known as the best pulp artists. His formal skills are top quality and his drawing is masterful. He painted so *many* covers, he must have been the absolute tops. So how can his name be completely unknown? His work is too good to shrug off and leave in the trash heap of oblivion, where all pulp magazines were originally intended to be tossed.

Thrilling Detective, April 1942

G-Men Detective, May 1942

Dime Western, September 1942

Romance, September 1942

Sweetheart Stories, November 1942

G-Men Detective, November 1942

Romance, November 1942

Thrilling Mystery, November 1942

I made photocopies of 150 pulp covers by this anonymous artist, and sent them to knowledgeable pulp historians, but no one could name the guy. The art itself is silent. The publishers have all folded, along with their records of activity; and that most indifferent trampler of sandcastles, Time itself, has already closed the books on most of the old pulp artists, who often passed away in obscurity, neglect, and poverty. So the fascinating personality behind these covers may justly "ask" for recognition; but sadly, there are very few ways remaining to discover his identity.

Although it was a hopeless project, I continued to collect his pulps, looking for the exceptional signed one, and studying cross-referenced examples to deduce some clues to his identity. The search became even more complex when I found a few stylistically-identical pulp covers with a variety of partially legible signatures for *different* names. Some had a signature composed of the initials "A. D.," and others were signed "AckA" and "E. C. Acka." Most of his work appeared in Popular, Thrilling, and Dell, and these publishers usually gave no printed credit to their cover artists. A. A. Wyn, owner of Ace Magazines, published *Ten Detective Aces*, *Western Trails*, and *Western Aces*, and he usually did give a printed credit to his cover artists on the contents page. This unknown artist must have been a top pro, so eventually he *had* to land a freelance job at one of these Ace titles, so I searched those magazines from the 1940s. I found a *Western Aces* from May 1945 that was stylistically identical. The contents page credited the cover artist as "Ernest Chiriacka." Bingo!

At last I had a full name. Chiriacka was a big-time slicks illustrator from the 1950s. He must have worked anonymously in the pulps to "save his good name" for a career in the slicks; but surprisingly, Chiriacka is best known for his elegant pin-ups from *Esquire* magazine. How could a top pin-up artist also have been, in secret, a top *shoot-em-up* pulp artist? Was Chiriacka the Zorro of illustrators, pretending to be a dandy lady's man by day while spending his nights brawling incognito in manly Western shoot-outs? Lots of slick illustrators got their start in the pulps, so I concentrated on learning more about Ernest Chiriacka. Oddly enough, each trail led to another artist bio filled with conflicting facts, dates, education, career, and various spellings of his name. Why is this guy still so hard to pin down? Chiriacka is variously reported to have spent his last years in Arizona, Minnesota, California, and Montana. No two sources could agree on his vital statistics, but most promotional material on illustrators is filled with a less-

◀ Cover illustration for *Fifteen Western Tales*, January 1949. Gouache on board, 26" x 20".

Exciting Mystery, February 1943

Range Riders Western, April 1943

Thrilling Detective, July 1943

The Phantom Detective, August 1943

10 Story Western, October 1943

The Phantom Detective, Dec. 1943

New Western, July 1943

Thrilling Western, July 1944

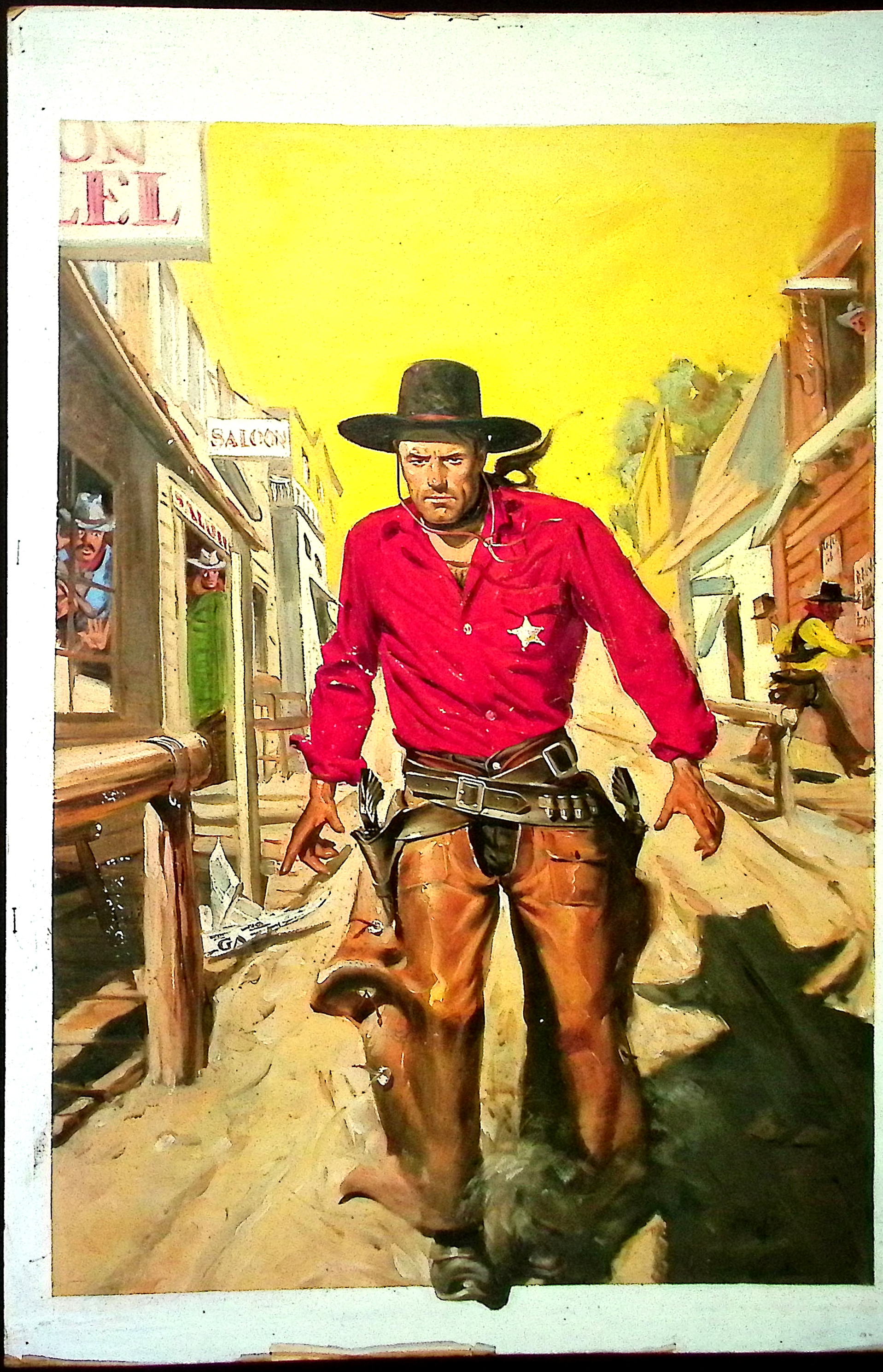
than professional grade of scholarship that is abbreviated as "B.S."—baloney and shine-ola.

I needed to find a reliable authority on this artist, such as a family member. Where had the artist actually lived and where are his relatives? I searched the auction houses for recent sales of Chiriacka illustrations to find a trail to any living relatives. I had seen a nice Chiriacka illustration for the *Saturday Evening Post* (August 18th, 1954) for sale in 2000, so I asked that auction house if the consignor was a family member. I was told the artist's daughter lived in Minneapolis. When I wrote to ask her about her father's actual biography, she called me and said, "You can ask him yourself. He lives out on Long Island." Double Bingo!

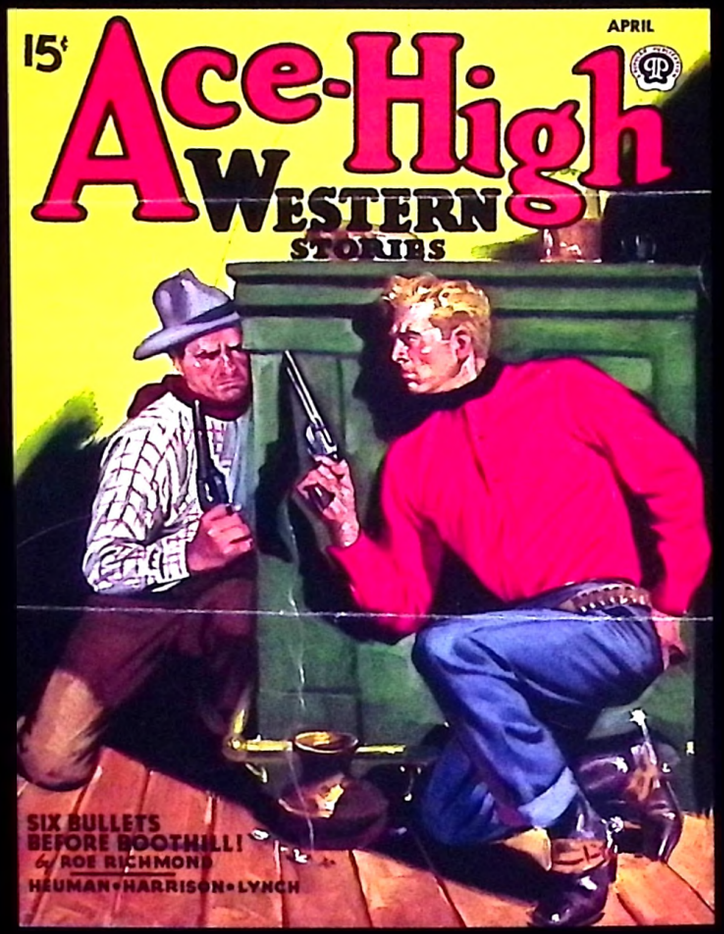
By the time I recovered my composure, I was already out in the suburbs, driving past all the garish pre-fab palaces. New York mansions are like cable TV: 100 windows and nothing worth looking at. I finally drove up a high hill, behind an ivy-buried stone gateway and a splendid driveway designed for horse-drawn carriages. This was the grand-daddy mansion of them all. A genuine estate from the era of the Great Gatsby. The surrounding acreage had overgrown into a bittersweet swamp thing that appeared to have killed and composted the gardener several seasons ago. The white-columns on the front entrance-way showed no signs of use in recent history. There was no car parked in sight. Although it was a cold, dark, wintry day, there were no lights on inside the house. I triple-checked the illegible house numbers that were carved into a granite rock, which had sunken below ground level and swarmed with brambles. Usually, numbers carved into granite have a durable aura of permanence, but as I kicked the dead twigs aside, they seemed to cling like the hands of Fate to the artist's obscurity. How could I hope to clarify the mystery of my research—and find lucid answers to befuddling questions—in a place that looked like a stage-set for a haunted Haversham Hall?

I stepped up to the mansion's imposing front door and found no bell. There was no buzzer, no knocker, and not even any name to announce itself to the remotest possibility of an unexpected visitor. Only cobwebs, dead leaves, and wind-blown debris. There was no outward sign that anyone had entered this "door" in years. I raised my hand and rapped my knuckles against the flaking white paint, and I suddenly felt as silly as Linus waiting all night in a garden patch for the Great Pumpkin—because only a childish wish could seriously expect some responsive sound of life from this silent manor.

Cover illustration for an unknown Western pulp, possibly for *Texas Rangers*, c. 1947. Gouache on board, 28" x 18".

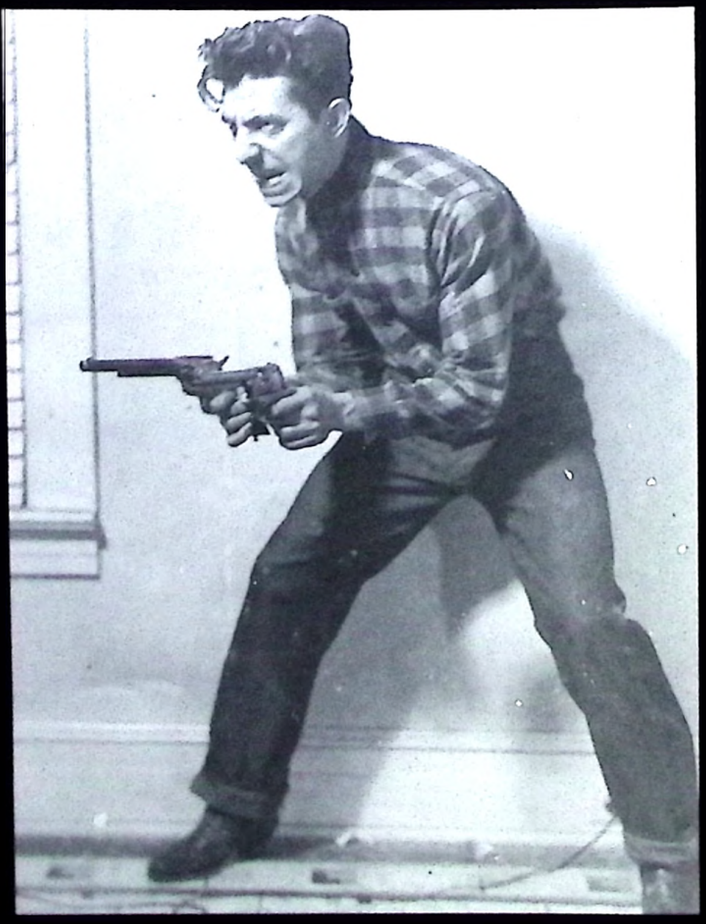

SALOON

Chiriacka poses for the cover of *Ace-High Western*, April 1946

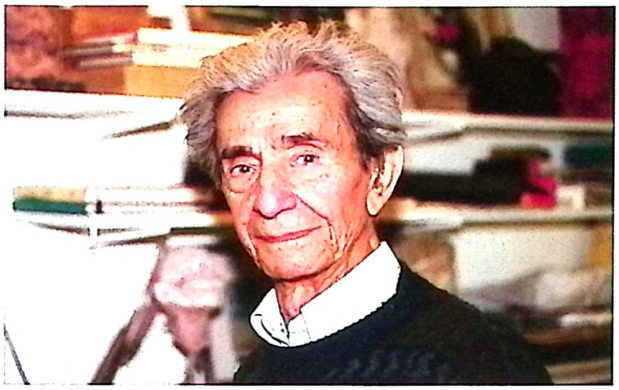


Ace-High Western, April 1946

.44 Western Magazine, July 1945



Chiriacka poses for the cover of *.44 Western Magazine*, July 1945



Ernest Chiriacka in his studio, 2003

INTERVIEW WITH A PULP ARTIST

"Hi! Please come in. You must be the son of Norm Saunders! I'm glad to meet you. My daughter said you'd be coming over. Well, as you can see, we've been making quite a mess lately."

Bingo! Bingo! Bingo!

With my first impression of Ernest Chiriacka, I instantly know that I'm in the right place. His elegant manner and dashing good looks, his intelligent and witty demeanor are perfect echoes of the essential temperament of the anonymous pulp artist I have studied five years to identify. The rugged, handsome features of the man himself are the physical embodiment of his own pulp heroes. The lively artist graciously escorted me into a spectacular banquet room, appointed with the sumptuous settings for a diplomatic reception from the past. But instead of ambassadors in medal-festooned tuxedos and their bejeweled wives in splendid evening gowns, every available space on the brocaded chairs, the inlaid dining tables, and the marble mantles is occupied with scrambled stacks of Chiriacka's paintings from his venerable career.

My head was spinning as we sat on an embroidered davenport. I clutched my box of pulps and looked around for any place to spread them out for his inspection.

Ernest Chiriacka: What've you got there?
David Saunders: I've brought some research materials.
EC: That's great! That's marvelous! "Research materials." (laughter)
DS: They're pulps I've been studying to find attributions. (Hands an example to the artist.)
EC: This isn't one of mine.
DS: No? It has a printed credit for the cover artist on the contents page. (Pointing to the printed credit.)
EC: (Reading printed credit) ..."CHIRIACKA." I can't remember them all. I did a lot of that! Yeah. Actually, what we did, illustrators, we did this stuff first before we could get into other finer illustrations for magazines. It was a stepping-stone. It also brought in some money. (laughter) That appears to be one of mine. Yep. The "red-shirt man." (laughter) This could have been mine.
DS: Well, I have a million questions I want to ask you.
EC: Shoot!
DS: This *Ten Detective Aces* from March 1945 shows a Japanese spy burying his radio transmitter. It says on the tombstone "1904–ACKA," which seems to be a variation on your name. This other issue of the same title also gives a printed credit on the contents page to the cover artist "Cheriacka."
EC: Whadya know! I did a lot of those things. Here's some photos of my work for the *Saturday Evening Post* from the 1950s. (Hands over folio of clippings.)
DS: These are sensational! I'd like to start with some questions about your pulp art before we get into your work for the *Post*, *Esquire*, and *Collier's*.
EC: Sure.
DS: Your drawing ability is fantastic. It's a beautiful distinctive style that's outstanding among the pulps. Were you always a gifted draftsman?
EC: I think I had the gene to begin with, and if you have the gene, this is what you're going to be. There was no doubt about it for me. Drawing came natural to me. My agent used to say, "Nobody can shine your shoes when it comes to drawing!"
DS: It's funny that the pulp magazines were, as you say, "a stepping stone," which didn't demand an artist's best effort, and yet many people did very good jobs.
EC: Yeah.
DS: ...The pulps had a limited format, because the time was rushed, and the subject matter was formulated...
EC: Yeah.
DS: ...but your drawing skill is extraordinary in the middle of all that.
EC: Yeah.
DS: I've been studying your work for the pulp magazines, and your distinctive drawing style is easy to recognize, but you don't sign them very often.
EC: Yeah. No signature.
DS: Was that partly because of the competing publishers?
EC: I didn't particularly worry about it one way or another, whether I signed or didn't sign. My aim was to get into the *slicks*! So, when I was doing these pulps, I didn't sign them, but, in fact, they did help a great deal to get ahead. As a matter of fact, a number of artists had used the pulps as a stepping-stone for getting into the slicks. Not all, but a number of them, like Baumhofer.
DS: What year were you born?
EC: 1913.
DS: What year did you sell your first pulp cover?
EC: I can't recall.
DS: Was it a Western? Was it a mystery or detective?
EC: It had to be a Western. No! No, no. Of course it was no Western! I know. It came to me. My very first one was a head. A girl's head. A pretty girl's head.
DS: That sounds like a cover for *Love Story*, maybe?
EC: *Love Story* magazine for Street & Smith! They were the first to buy my work and they were the biggest magazine

Chiriacka poses for the cover of *Big Book Western*, February 1944

Chiriacka poses for the cover of *Adventure*, March 1945

publisher, and they *bought* it.

DS: That title was very successful. No one thought *Love Story* was going to make it, but they made big money and lasted for 26 years.

EC: Yeah. I remember going to the publisher's office, and here was this man working away at a tall ladder up on the ceiling. I don't know why he was up there, but he was doing something and he looks down at me and says, "What do you want?" And I said, "I'd like to see the art director." He said, "Well, wait there a while, and I'll be down pretty soon." It turns out *he* was the art director, fixing something up there on the ceiling! (laughter)

DS: Gotta keep busy! (laughter) Was that William "Pop" Hines?

EC: I don't know his name. But I sold my first pulp cover to Street & Smith of that pretty girl. From there I went to the Westerns. I was a natural with the cowboys. I had no problem there at all.

DS: So, Street & Smith's Western publications at that time would be *Wild West Weekly* and *Western Story*.

EC: They had them. They were the *original*. They had a *Love Story* thing, they had a *Wild West*, and the art director spoke about "*style*" or "*level*." You had to work on a "*level*." I agreed completely, but I couldn't understand him anyway. "You can't do this or that. You must *follow* this through there, otherwise you'd *lose* that!" And I'd say, "Yes Sir! What ever you want!" And I had no idea what he was talking about! (laughter)

DS: Was that around 1940?

EC: I can only date it by thinking about my wife, Katherine. We married in 1937 when I got a steady job at a movie poster company. They folded about three years later and I went right into painting for the pulps. Immediately. It was the easiest thing in the world! I could do these things everyday without having models or anything else. It was a snap! (laughter)

DS: Did you use your wife as a model?

EC: I used her once or twice, but she didn't like the idea, so we stopped that. (laughter) Well, I could imagine how my wife felt when I did the pin-ups!

DS: Yeah, it's better to get a professional model for that. It's much less complex emotionally. So the first cover you did for Street & Smith *Love Story* magazine was probably around 1940?

EC: It was my very first cover.

DS: Did the jobs for the pulps come routinely after your first ones?

EC: I was the *tops*! (laughter) They *needed* me! I was doing three or four for one publisher and I was doing the same amount for another! The jobs took me one day, or a couple of hours. With very little effort I painted these things in—without having models or anything else. It was a cinch!

DS: Did you work for Popular?

EC: Popular! Popular Publications. That was my first steady work after Street & Smith. I couldn't get to Street & Smith after that first time, but there wasn't any reason for it anymore! I didn't have to be on *their* covers. I was on everybody else's covers!

Chiriacka with his wife Katherine, c. 1940s

DS: Did you work for Ace at that time also?

EC: Yes.

DS: You did *Ten Detective Aces*. Can you remember some of the other titles of the magazines you routinely worked for?

EC: No.

DS: Did you do any *Ranch Romances*?

EC: No. I did a few covers for *Sweetheart Stories*. I didn't do too many romances after that first cover. That was just one of my samples. That was before I hit it big or anything at all. Street &

Chiriacka poses for the cover of *Adventure*, March 1945

Smith bought this *Love Story* painting I brought around, and from there on in, I did cowboys. They were a lot easier for me to do than pretty girls. (laughter)

DS: When you were starting out in the pulps, did you go around for a while looking for work with a portfolio?

EC: No. You did a painting that you hoped they'd like. You brought it to them and they'd say, "Hey, yeah, yeah! That's good! And leave that other one. We can use that one too!"

DS: What was the office like? Would there be a couple of other guys waiting around to show their own unsolicited freelance paintings to the art director?

EC: They would be sitting there sometimes, but I didn't have to do that after I sold my first and second covers. After that, the art directors counted on *me* to get them four to six paintings during the month or whatever. Actually I would go from one publisher to the other if I wanted to, but I remained with Alexander Portugal; we got along well and he became a good friend.

DS: He was the art director at Popular?

EC: Yeah, and from there I went into the others.

DS: Did you show your work to Harry Steeger at Popular?

EC: I may have. [Walter] Baumhofer used to do pulp covers at Popular and he got into the slicks and I followed him from there into the slicks.

DS: I knew him when I was a kid through my father. He was a wonderful guy and a very good artist.

EC: Yeah. Yep. Very good.

DS: Here's a pile of 150 photocopies of pulp covers. (The artist takes the pile and begins flipping through them.) Don't you need your glasses to look at them?

EC: I don't need any glasses to look at *these* things! (laughter) I can tell you this, there came a time when I didn't need the model to pose at all! So I used to do these things without the model, and that's how fast we worked in the illustration business for pulp magazines.

DS: You could only afford to hire a model for the slicks, because they paid better.

EC: Yeah. If you're working for the slick magazines, you've got to have a model. Yeah. You couldn't fake anything, because in the slicks there's a *story.* This is a high-class *magazine.* It's not

Stuart Ng—Books

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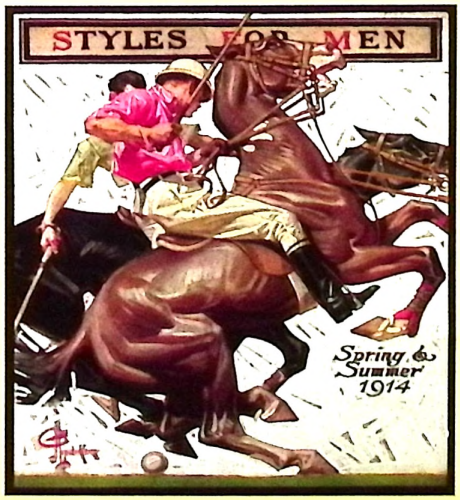

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Texas Rangers, December 1944

a pulp cover or that sort of stuff. (laughter)

DS: You know, it's funny. I've never heard a slick illustrator call them the "slicks!" My father was a pulp illustrator who never made it to the slicks, and he always referred to them as the "slicks," but I've always presumed he used that term because he was a pulp artist. Like some guy from the poor side of town who says, "Those hot-shots over there have all the luck!" But if that fellow makes it big and moves uptown, he's not going to call himself a "hot-shot." So, why would a slick illustrator still call himself a "slick" illustrator after he made it to the *Post*? Did all the slick illustrators refer to themselves that way after they'd made it to the slicks?

EC: They still used that term because the *pulps* used pulp paper and the *slicks* used slick paper. It's always been the name of the profession. But also, the word "slick" is like the word "star" in the theater world. (Laughs, and then looks at a particular cover.) I remember that one! My brother-in-law was posing for me.

DS: You've gotta help me identify them all.

EC: Yeah. I had a brother-in-law and I made a lot of photos of him for reference. He was an actor. He *loved* acting! He had a good head. A strong head. I used him most of the time for this stuff. There. (Pointing out a pulp cover) That's him there. It's a good character, but you have to show the *teeth*! That anger! You've gotta have them up there, no matter what else you do. And you've got to exaggerate them. (laughter) Oh, they're wonderful!

DS: They really are.

EC: The publisher at Thrilling Mystery said he liked to use my work because I painted the girls screaming. "You always make a *screaming* girl look beautiful! Her mouth looks like she's almost *laughing*!"

DS: Some of your characters resemble Hollywood film stars.

EC: Gary Cooper. That's the guy we had in all our Western pulps.

DS: You often have this outrageous bald-headed villain. You were the only pulp artist to introduce fat bald guys to the cast of Wild West characters! He looks a bit like Peter Lorre or Sam Elam.

EC: (laughter) That was another brother-in-law, Tommy Delessio. I would do the pulps rapidly. I couldn't have the same character. It always had to be a little different, but a bald head is far more interesting than a head of hair. Bald is always more interesting!

DS: (laughter) You can say that because you're 90 years old with a big, thick head of hair! One unique trait that I noticed in your pulps is that whenever you have a pistol aiming directly at the viewer, you always show the bullet ejector visible in the next chamber to fire.

EC: Yep!

DS: Always.

EC: Yeah!

DS: Did you own a brace of pistols to arm your models for reference?

EC: I did have one of these guns.

DS: I ask because I was hoping to tell other collectors that when they see an unsigned Western pulp that has a pistol with this radiant *burst* of red lines from the muzzle and a bullet-ejector visible in the next chamber, it may be painted by Ernest Chiriacka. Was this some kind of discrete signature on your part?

EC: No. (laughter) I finally did have a revolver. My sister, the actress Athena Lord, got one when she was filming somewhere on location out in the West. (laughter) She and my brother-in-law, Jim Boles, were both bit-players in Hollywood.

DS: You really do draw women beautifully. Dad used to say, "Most illustrators can either paint men in action or beautiful women, but rarely both! You really got it made if you can paint 'em both!" (laughter) I guess Chiriacka's really got it made!

EC: (Laughter) It was no problem whatsoever!

DS: So who were your pals? Were the pulp artists friendly with each other, or did they all compete for the same jobs and hate each other's guts?

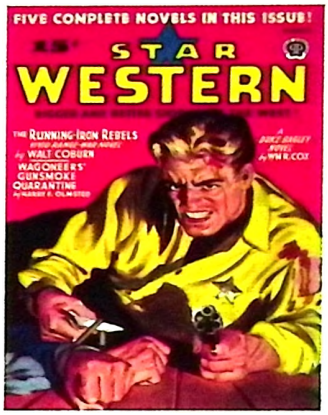
EC: No. No. It wasn't that. We all got along fine, but we were too busy to socialize. Some of them were drinkers, but I just wasn't someone that wanted to belong to a group. Yeah. (silence) Harry Barton. He was the only one.

DS: Harry Barton did paperback covers in the 1950s. What about the other pulp artists from the 1940s? There's another

West, January 1945

Popular Detective, February 1945

New Detective, March 1945

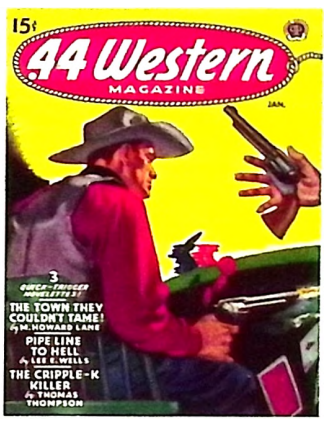


Star Western, March 1945

G-Men Detective, April 1945

Ace-High Western, September 1945

New Detective, January 1946



.44 Western Magazine, January 1946

guy I'm curious about who uses a signature with the initials "A.D." Who is that?

EC: ...(silence)

DS: He was most active around 1942. What did you do during the war?

EC: I was very busy painting covers for the pulps during that whole time.

DS: Did you stop doing new work for the pulps after the war?

EC: I worked for them up until the early 1950s. After that, I didn't have time to do them anymore, because I had the slicks.

DS: The pulps were fading out of fashion by the 1950s, but you were already doing the slicks, so you weren't thinking about retirement. When did you sell your last pulp to Alex Portugal at Popular?

EC: That's really an excellent question... I did them into the 1950s, because we were already living in this house after 1951, and I was still doing pulps, because I remember going to the Portugals' house. Yeah. We'd spend the weekend there.

DS: All of the short artist bios on you are full of conflicting info. Did you ever actually move out West?

EC: No. They just said that for publicity. Unless you were a person that *saw* cowboys, or was next to a cowboy, or had actually shaken hands with a cowboy, you just didn't rate! (laughter)

DS: In the 1970s, when my Dad was showing at the Kennedy Gallery, they asked him to play-up his Western heritage in his artist-bio. So when he said he was born on a farm, they wrote it: "Raised on a Cattle Ranch." And Dad said, "Well, yeah, sort of. We had a cow. You *could* say that." (laughter)

EC: "You weren't a baker, right? You were a *Westerner*! Weren't you?" (laughter) Kennedy Gallery. Yeah. I had some stuff there too. Back in those days, they had to make up stories that sounded good to the public. Today, they want to know the truth. It's so much more important today if you come from the slums somewhere. Years ago they wanted fairy tale stories.

DS: Whenever there's big money at stake in some industry, they can only make a profit when a million people show up! That's when the truth becomes less important than the fear of losing any fraction of your audience.

EC: ...and that's why they changed people's names all the time. I also painted under the name "Darcy."

DS: What was that full name?

EC: "Anastassios Darcy."

DS: Where did you get that name from?

EC: Well, we're Greek, and my name, "Ernest," is actually *Anastassios*, and that was shortened for my nickname, "Tasso," which is pronounced, "Dah-so," or as they say, "Darcy." That's how we got "Anastassios Darcy!"

DS: Did you use this signature, "A.D.," like that? (Pointing.)

Dime Detective Magazine, September 1946

EC: (silence)

DS: Because there's a series of pulps I've brought which all have an "A.D." signature, and the style is similar to your work.

EC: (Examines issues.) I see. Perhaps. It could be. And I also painted under "Acka."

DS: I brought a selection of those too.

EC: Did you know they were mine?

DS: I brought them because I wanted you to tell me who they were painted by. I hoped you could explain why they all look a lot like your work.

EC: Well. (laughter) At one point, I didn't need models. (Looks at stack of pulps.) This one's mine. This one, I remember this one. That's not mine. It's too soft. This is mine. This guy's mine. I remember that... (laughter) Wait a minute. I just thought of something to show you. (Laughing, Chiriacka gets up and walks out of the room to retrieve something from his studio. After a few minutes, he returns and hands over three thick folders.)

DS: What did you find?

EC: Now! I remembered!

DS: (Opens first folder, which contains hundreds of one-sided color proofs of pulp magazine covers. Several on top have the initialed-signature "A.D.")

EC: Thrilling Publications! I was doing illustrations for them at the time and they wanted me to do a painting for a cover for one of them. They came up with this idea for a magazine cover by themselves, for the pulp thing, so I said, "Okay! I'll do *your* idea, but I'll have to sign it *Darcy*!" ...so no one would know who it was! (laughter)

DS: That's what *they* thought! (laughter) How did pulp artists wind up with these collections of proof sheets? I know my father and DeSoto and Belarski all had a similar stack of proof sheets in their files. Can you describe the actual formality of the exchange of a freelance cover with a pulp publisher? When you dropped off the original job, did they give you these proofs from your previous jobs?

EC: No. I think the art director would probably have the proofs. They always had proofs. The art editor would use the printer's proofs to "pass" on colors and so forth...

DS: Would they ask the artist about the colors?

EC: No.

DS: So why did the pulp artists wind up with these proofs? When each job was over and you received your payment for the freelance sale, was the proof sheet attached to the receipt as a documentation of the sale?

EC: I don't remember that, but we did have them.

DS: Your work for the pulps is currently collected because they look good, but people don't know the name of the artist, or the qualities that distinguish you from other anonymous illustrators of that era. The collector's task is even more difficult because of your various pseudonyms, but after today, we can now assemble a reasonable checklist of your covers for pulp magazines, and you may turn out to be the most prolific artist of that era.

EC: Well, they certainly kept me busy! (sighs) The pulps did well for us all. And even the *authors*. They graduated from the pulps to writing their own books. We were all going through a lot of hard work and the audience had nothing to do but read them!

DS: That's show business!

EC: (laughter) Are you keeping a history on the pulp covers?

DS: Just on certain artists. It started because some people would sell pulps saying, "This is by Norman Saunders," when it wasn't. I wanted to correct those misattributions before everyone accepted them as truth.

EC: Yeah. Sure. With all the years gone by.

DS: Your collection of proof sheets is a priceless historic document because it's the definitive authority. If we add those to the ones you've identified from my pulp collection, they all add up to over 500 Chiriacka pulp covers, and there must be more. Our combined checklist will help future historians identify the rest of your pulps.

EC: You certainly did your homework. You had the *hard* job.

DS: That was just the pulps. I'll need to come back to document your full career and biography. Illustration is only a small part of 20th Century American painting, but as time goes by, it'll be impossible to discover the real history, and I'm pretty sure that's when people will want to know.

EC: Yeah. Right.

DS: It has to be done while we can.

EC: Okay, if you say so! (laughter) [End of interview.]

A CHECKLIST OF ERNEST CHIRIACKA PULP MAGAZINE COVERS

This checklist identifies 550 pulp magazines with covers painted by Ernest Chiriacka between the years 1940 to 1955. Although this list is not complete, it does identify the specific titles and dates that comprise the artist's career within the history of pulp publications.

1940-08 *Big Book Western*
1940-10 *Big Book Western*
1940-12 *Star Western*

1941-01 *Dime Western*
1941-01 *G-Men Detective*
1941-03 *Dime Western*
1941-03 *Star Western*
1941-04 *Phantom Detective*
1941-04 *Star Western*
1941-05 *Phantom Detective*
1941-07 *Dime Western*
1941-08 *Dime Western*
1941-08 *Exciting Detective*
1941-08 *Phantom Detective*
1941-09 *Black Book Detective*
1941-09 *G-Men Detective*
1941-10 *Big Book Western*
1941-10 *Dime Western*
1941-10 *Phantom Detective*
1941-10 *Sweetheart Stories*
1941-11 *Black Book Detective*
1941-11 *G Men Detective*
1941-11 *Phantom Detective*
1941-11 *Thrilling Mystery*
1941-12 *Dime Western*
1941-12 *Rangeland Romances*
1941-12 *Sweetheart Stories*

1942-01 *Dime Western*
1942-01 *Rangeland Romances*
1942-01 *Star Western*
1942-01 *Sweetheart Stories*
1942-02 *Big Book Western*
1942-02 *Detective Novels*
1942-02 *Dime Western*
1942-02 *Rodeo Romances*
1942-03 *Dime Western*
1942-03 *Exciting Detective*
1942-03 *Star Western*
1942-03 *Sweetheart Stories*
1942-04 *Big Book Western*
1942-04 *Dime Western*
1942-04 *Phantom Detective*
1942-04 *Star Western*
1942-04 *Sweetheart Stories*
1942-04 *Thrilling Detective*
1942-05 *Dime Western*
1942-05 *G Men Detective*
1942-05 *New Western*
1942-05 *Star Western*
1942-05 *Sweetheart Stories*
1942-05 *10 Story Western*
1942-05 *Thrilling Western*
1942-05 *Western Aces*
1942-06 *Big Book Western*
1942-06 *Dime Western*
1942-06 *New Western*
1942-06 *Phantom Detective*
1942-06 *10 Story Western*
1942-06 *Star Western*
1942-07 *Ace-High Western*
1942-07 *Adventure*
1942-07 *Dime Western*
1942-07 *Exciting Western*
1942-07 *.44 Western*
1942-07 *New Western*
1942-07 *10-Story Western*
1942-07 *Thrilling Western*
1942-08 *Dime Western*
1942-08 *Big Book Detective*
1942-08 *Big Book Western*
1942-08 *New Western*
1942-08 *Rodeo Romances*
1942-08 *Thrilling Adventures*
1942-08 *10-Story Western*
1942-09 *Dime Western*
1942-09 *G Men Detective*
1942-09 *Romance*
1942-09 *Star Western*
1942-09 *Sweetheart Stories*
1942-10 *Star Western*
1942-10 *Sweetheart Stories*
1942-10 *Thrilling Adventures*
1942-11 *G Men Detective*
1942-11 *Romance*
1942-11 *Sweetheart Stories*
1942-11 *Thrilling Mystery*
1942-12 *Big Book Western*
1942-12 *Dime Western*
1942-12 *Exciting Mystery*
1942-12 *Phantom Detective*
1942-12 *Sweetheart Stories*
1942-12 *Texas Rangers*

1943-01 *Ace-High Western*
1943-01 *G-Men Detective*
1943-01 *Masked Detective*
1943-01 *New Western*
1943-02 *Dime Western*
1943-02 *Exciting Mystery*
1943-02 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1943-02 *Sweetheart Stories*
1943-02 *Texas Rangers*
1943-03 *Exciting Detective*
1943-03 *Love Novels*
1943-03 *New Western*
1943-03 *Star Western*
1943-03 *Thrilling Adventures*
1943-03 *Thrilling Mystery*
1943-04 *Detective Novels*
1943-04 *Dime Western*
1943-04 *Range Riders Western*
1943-04 *Star Western*
1943-05 *Dime Western*
1943-06 *Big Book Western*
1943-06 *Dime Western*
1943-06 *Phantom Detective*
1943-07 *Ace-High Western*
1943-07 *Dime Western*
1943-07 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1943-07 *Popular Western*
1943-07 *Thrilling Detective*
1943-07 *Star Western*
1943-08 *Dime Western*
1943-08 *Phantom Detective*
1943-08 *Star Western*
1943-09 *Ace-High Western*
1943-09 *Dime Western*
1943-09 *Star Western*
1943-09 *10-Story Western*
1943-09 *Thrilling Western*
1943-10 *Big Book Western*
1943-10 *Dime Western*
1943-10 *Flynn's Detective*
1943-10 *10-Story Western*
1943-11 *Dime Western*
1943-11 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1943-11 *.44 Western*
1943-11 *New Detective*
1943-11 *Romance*
1943-11 *10-Story Western*
1943-12 *Big Book Western*
1943-12 *Dime Western*
1943-12 *Phantom Detective*
1943-12 *Star Western*
1943-12 *10-Story Western*

1944-01 *Dime Western*
1944-01 *.44 Western*
1944-01 *New Western*
1944-01 *Rodeo Romances*
1944-01 *Star Western*
1944-02 *Big Book Western*
1944-02 *Dime Western*
1944-02 *Exciting Western*
1944-02 *Popular Detective*
1944-02 *Star Western*
1944-03 *Ace-High Western*
1944-03 *.44 Western*
1944-04 *10-Story Western*
1944-04 *Thrilling Detective*
1944-05 *Ace-High Western*
1944-05 *Dime Mystery*
1944-05 *Dime Western*
1944-05 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1944-05 *.44 Western*
1944-05 *Star Western*
1944-06 *Dime Western*
1944-06 *Popular Detective*
1944-06 *10-Story Western*
1944-07 *Ace-High Western*
1944-07 *Dime Western*
1944-07 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1944-07 *New Western*
1944-07 *Star Western*
1944-07 *Thrilling Western*
1944-08 *Texas Rangers*
1944-08 *Thrilling Mystery*
1944-09 *Ace-High Western*
1944-09 *Dime Western*
1944-09 *Thrilling Western*
1944-10 *Masked Rider Western*
1944-10 *Star Western*
1944-10 *10-Story Western*
1944-10 *Texas Rangers*
1944-11 *Ace-High Western*
1944-11 *Dime Western*
1944-11 *.44 Western*
1944-11 *New Western*
1944-11 *Star Western*
1944-11 *Ten Detective Aces*
1944-11 *West*
1944-12 *Big Book Western*
1944-12 *Popular Detective*
1944-12 *10-Story Detective*
1944-12 *10-Story Western*
1944-12 *Texas Rangers*

1945-01 *Ace-High Western*
1945-01 *Dime Western*
1945-01 *.44 Western*
1945-01 *New Western*
1945-01 *Popular Western*
1945-01 *Star Western*
1945-01 *Ten Detective Aces*
1945-01 *10-Story Western*
1945-01 *West*
1945-01 *Western Aces*
1945-02 *Big Book Western*
1945-02 *Dime Western*
1945-02 *Popular Detective*
1945-02 *Star Western*
1945-02 *10-Story Detective*
1945-02 *Western Trails*
1945-03 *Ace-High Western*
1945-03 *Adventure*
1945-03 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1945-03 *44 Western*
1945-03 *Masked Rider Western*
1945-03 *New Detective*
1945-03 *Star Western*
1945-03 *Ten Detective Aces*
1945-03 *West*
1945-04 *Big Book Western*
1945-04 *Detective Novels*
1945-04 *.44 Western*
1945-04 *G-Men Detective*
1945-04 *Phantom Detective*
1945-04 *Star Western*
1945-04 *10-Story Detective*
1945-04 *10-Story Western*
1945-04 *Western Trails*
1945-05 *Ace-High Western*
1945-05 *Big Book Western*
1945-05 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1945-05 *.44 Western*
1945-05 *New Western*
1945-05 *Star Western*
1945-05 *Ten Detective Aces*
1945-05 *West*
1945-05 *Western Aces*
1945-06 *Big Book Western*
1945-06 *Black Book Detective*
1945-06 *Phantom Detective*
1945-06 *10-Story Detective*
1945 06 *Star Western*
1945-07 *Ace-High Western*
1945-07 *Dime Western*
1945-07 *.44 Western*
1945-07 *New Western*
1945-07 *Popular Western*
1945-07 *Star Western*
1945-08 *Big Book Western*
1945-08 *Exciting Western*
1945-08 *Star Western*
1945-08 *Texas Rangers*
1945-08 *Western Trails*
1945-09 *Ace-High Western*
1945-09 *Argosy*
1945-09 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1945-09 *.44 Western*
1945-09 *New Western*
1945-09 *Star Western*
1945-09 *Ten Detective Aces*
1945-10 *Big Book Western*
1945-10 *Detective Novels*
1945-10 *Dime Detective*
1945-10 *Dime Western*
1945-10 *Exciting Western*
1945-10 *.44 Western*
1945-10 *Star Western*
1945-10 *10-Story Western*
1945-11 *Ace-High Western*
1945-11 *Dime Detective*
1945-11 *Dime Western*
1945-11 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1945-11 *Star Western*
1945-12 *Adventure*
1945-12 *Big Book Western*
1945-12 *Dime Detective*
1945-12 *10-Story Western*
1945-12 *Texas Rangers*
1945-12 *West*

1946-01 *Big Book Western*
1946-01 *Dime Detective*
1946-01 *Famous Western*
1946-01 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1946-01 *.44 Western*
1946-01 *New Detective*
1946-01 *Star Western*
1946-01 *Texas Rangers*
1946-01 *West*
1946-02 *.44 Western*
1946-02 *Ace-High Western*
1946-02 *Big Book Western*
1946-02 *Dime Detective*
1946-02 *Exciting Western*
1946-02 *Sports Novels*
1946-02 *10-Story Detective*
1946-02 *Thrilling Western*
1946-02 *West*
1946-03 *Ace-High Western*
1946-03 *Dime Detective*
1946-03 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1946-03 *.44 Western*
1946-03 *New Western*
1946-03 *Thrilling Detective*
1946-03 *Star Western*
1946-03 *West*
1946-04 *Ace-High Western*
1946-04 *Big Book Western*
1946-04 *Exciting Western*
1946-04 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1946-04 *.44 Western*
1946-04 *New Western*
1946-04 *10-Story Detective*
1946-04 *Texas Rangers*
1946-04 *West*
1946-05 *Dime Western*
1946-05 *.44 Western*
1946-05 *West*
1946-06 *Ace-High Western*
1946-06 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1946-06 *.44 Western*
1946-06 *Sports Novels*
1946-06 *Star Western*
1946-06 *10-Story Western*
1946-06 *Texas Rangers*
1946-06 *Thrilling Western*
1946-06 *West*
1946-07 *Crack Detective*
1946-07 *Detective Tales*
1946-07 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1946-07 *.44 Western*
1946-07 *Popular Western*
1946-07 *Texas Rangers*
1946-08 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1946-08 *10-Story Western*
1946-08 *Texas Rangers*
1946-08 *Thrilling Western*
1946-08 *West*
1946-09 *Dime Detective*
1946-09 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1946-10 *Ace-High Western*
1946-10 *.44 Western*
1946-10 *West*
1946-11 *Texas Rangers*
1946-11 *West*
1946-12 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1946-12 *Popular Western*
1946-12 *Sports Novels*
1946-12 *Texas Rangers*
1946-12 *Thrilling Western*
1946-12 *West*

1947-01 *Dime Detective*
1947-01 *Dime Western*
1947-01 *Exciting Western*
1947-01 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1947-01 *New Western*
1947-01 *Thrilling Western*
1947-01 *Texas Rangers*
1947-02 *Ace-High Western*
1947-02 *.44 Western*
1947-02 *Big Book Western*
1947-02 *New Western*
1947-02 *Popular Western*
1947-02 *Texas Rangers*
1947-02 *Thrilling Western*
1947-02 *West*
1947-03 *Exciting Western*
1947-03 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1947-03 *Texas Rangers*
1947-03 *Thrilling Ranch*
1947-04 *Ace-High Western*
1947-04 *Detective Mystery*
1947-04 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1947-04 *Popular Western*
1947-04 *Rodeo Romances*
1947-04 *Sports Novels*
1947-04 *Texas Rangers*
1947-04 *Thrilling Detective*
1947-05 *Exciting Western*
1947-05 *Big Book Western*
1947-05 *Texas Rangers*
1947-06 *Popular Western*
1947-06 *Texas Rangers*
1947-07 *Ace-High Western*
1947-07 *Dime Western*
1947-07 *New Detective*
1947-08 *Ace-High Western*
1947-08 *New Western*
1947-08 *Rodeo Romances*
1947-08 *Star Western*
1947-08 *Texas Rangers*
1947-08 *Thrilling Detective*
1947-09 *Exciting Western*
1947-09 *New Detective*
1947-09 *Texas Rangers*
1947-09 *Thrilling Ranch*
1947-10 *Big Book Western*
1947-10 *Popular Western*
1947-10 *Texas Rangers*
1947-11 *Exciting Western*
1947-11 *Detective Tales*
1947-11 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1947-11 *Texas Rangers*
1947-12 *Ace-High Western*
1947-12 *Dime Western*
1947-12 *Thrilling Western*

1948-01 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1948-01 *Texas Rangers*
1948-01 *West*
1948-02 *Texas Rangers*
1948-03 *Exciting Western*
1948-03 *Thrilling Ranch*
1948-03 *Thrilling Western*
1948-03 *Texas Rangers*
1948-04 *Ace-High Western*
1948-04 *Popular Western*
1948-04 *Texas Rangers*
1948-05 *G-Men Detective*
1948-05 *Thrilling Western*
1948-05 *Thrilling Ranch*
1948-06 *Dime Western*
1948-06 *Texas Rangers*
1948-07 *Texas Rangers*
1948-07 *Thrilling Sports*
1948-07 *West*
1948-08 *Thrilling Detective*
1948-08 *Thrilling Western*
1948-08 *Texas Rangers*
1948-09 *Texas Rangers*
1948-10 *Exciting Football*
1948-10 *Popular Western*
1948-10 *Texas Rangers*
1948-10 *Thrilling Western*
1948-11 *Thrilling Football*
1948-11 *Exciting Western*
1948-11 *Phantom Detective*
1948-12 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1948-12 *Popular Western*

1949-01 *Exciting Western*
1949-01 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1949-01 *Sports Novels*
1949-01 *Texas Rangers*
1949-01 *Thrilling Ranch*
1949-02 *Ace-High Western*
1949-02 *Dime Western*
1949-02 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1949-02 *Popular Western*
1949-02 *Texas Rangers*
1949-03 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1949-03 *Big Book Western*
1949-03 *New Western*
1949-03 *Phantom Detective*
1949-03 *Texas Rangers*
1949-04 *Detective Mystery*
1949-04 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1949-04 *New Western*
1949-04 *Popular Western*
1949-04 *Thrilling Western*
1949-04 *Texas Rangers*
1949-05 *Exciting Western*
1949-05 *Dime Western*
1949-05 *10-Story Western*
1949-05 *Thrilling Ranch*
1949-05 *Texas Rangers*
1949-06 *All-Story Detective*
1949-06 *Dime Western*
1949-07 *West*
1949-08 *Complete Western Book*
1949-08 *Texas Rangers*
1949-08 *Thrilling Western*
1949-09 *West*
1949-10 *Black Book Detective*
1949-10 *Texas Rangers*
1949-11 *Five Western Novels*
1949-11 *Texas Rangers*
1949-11 *West*
1949-12 *Thrilling Detective*

1950-01 *Black Book Detective*
1950-01 *Phantom Detective*
1950-01 *Romantic Western Annual*
1950-02 *Popular Western*
1950-02 *Texas Rangers*
1950-03 *Exciting Western*
1950-03 *Texas Rangers*
1950-04 *G-Men Detective*
1950-04 *Texas Rangers*
1950-05 *New Western*
1950-06 *Popular Western*
1950-06 *Texas Rangers*
1950-08 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1950-08 *Texas Rangers*
1950-08 *Thrilling Detective*
1950-09 *Popular Western*
1950-09 *Texas Rangers*
1950-10 *Phantom Detective*
1950-10 *Texas Rangers*
1950-12 *Five Western Novels*
1950-12 *Texas Rangers*
1950-12 *Western Novel*

1951-00 *Dime Western #19* [ALS.]
1951-01 *Exciting Western*
1951-02 *Dime Western*
1951-02 *Popular Western*
1951-02 *Texas Rangers*
1951-02 *Thrilling Detective*
1951-04 *Five Western Novels*
1951-04 *Popular Western*
1951-04 *Texas Rangers*
1951-05 *Big Book Western*
1951-05 *Exciting Western*
1951-06 *Texas Rangers*
1951-06 *Thrilling Detective*
1951-06 *Thrilling Ranch*
1951-07 *Exciting Western*
1951-08 *Five Western Novels*
1951-09 *Exciting Western*
1951-09 *Texas Rangers*
1951-11 *Exciting Western*
1951-11 *Texas Rangers*

1952-03 *.44 Western*
1952-03 *West*
1952-04 *Five Western Novels*
1952-06 *Five Western Novels*
1952-07 *Big Book Western*
1952-07 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1952-11 *Texas Rangers*
1952-12 *Texas Rangers*

1953-03 *Big Book Western*
1953-03 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1953-03 *New Western*
1953-05 *.44 Western*
1953-05 *New Western*
1953-07 *.44 Western*
1953-08 *Dime Detective*
1953-10 *Western Ace-High*
1953-10 *Western Rangers*
1953-12 *Texas Rangers*

1954-03 *Max Brand's Western*
1954-04 *Western Ace-High*
1954-04 *Western Rangers*
1954-05 *Dime Western*
1954-05 *Fifteen Western Tales*
1954-05 *.44 Western*
1954-05 *Max Brand's Western*
1954-06 *Star Western*
1954-06 *Texas Rangers*
1954-06 *Western Ace-High*
1954-07 *Dime Western*
1954-08 *Big Book Western*
1954-09 *Star Western*

1955-05 *Exciting Western* [U.K.]
1955-12 *Western Story Roundup*

THE HISTORY OF ERNEST "DARCY" CHIRIACKA

I had started out to identify an anonymous and prolific cover artist from the pulp magazines, but stumbled instead through a "secret door" into the grandiose mansion of a 90-year old artist, where I faced the unsought spectacle of his colossal art career—12 years in the pulps, 13 years in the slicks, and another 38 years as a gallery artist exhibiting throughout the world.

The artist graciously answered all of my questions over six visits for 12 hours of taped interviews for this historical record of 20th Century American illustration art.

Ernest Chiriacka was born Anastassios Kyriakakos in New York City on May 11, 1913, and lived at 42 Madison Street on the Lower East Side. To imagine the living conditions of this ghetto at the turn of the century, look at the heart-breaking photo-essay by Jacob Riis, "How the Other Half Lives," which revealed the astonishing hardships of children growing up in these shamefully squalid tenement buildings. His parents, Portia and Herakles Kyriakakos, had emigrated from the mountain village of Xero Cambi in the Sparta region of Greece in 1907. Herakles was an educated young man who had studied to be a Greek Orthodox abbot, but could not adjust to the harsh reality of the bustling slums of New York, where the only jobs for a non-lingual immigrant were unskilled menial labor. Although *Hercules* performed his 12 heroic labors, Herakles refused to lower himself to work as a dishwasher, shoeshiner, or push-cart laborer. He changed his name to "Harry Chiriacka," but made no further effort to become an American or learn English, and he fell into the languid despair of drink. Fortunately, his wife Portia was an industrious person who raised six children, supervising their public school educations as well as their attendance in Greek school to learn their native culture and language. Anastassios was their third child. He was called "Tasso" for short, which is pronounced "dah-so," and is transliterated as "Darcy."

The Greek language uses an ancient alphabet whose letters have no exact equivalents in English, so translations must resort to phonetic transliteration. This basic dependence on substitute sounds compels Greeks to accept the cavalier imprecision of American versions of their names. So, "Anastassios Kyriakakos" was changed to "Ernest Chiriacka," and his childhood nickname, "Tasso," remains today as "Darcy." Thus began this carefree artist's lifelong trait of fluid identities.

Darcy started out life on the lowest rung of America's social ladder. He was small, frightened, and hungry. His homelife was crowded, harried, and desperate, so, like a million other city kids, he scratched together a tough childhood from the cobblestone world of street vendors, newsstands, and shoeshine boxes. Madison Street was just a block away from Henry Street, where Al Smith and Jimmy Walker attended services at the St. James Church and threw their weight around the political patronage machine of Tammany Hall. But more importantly, Henry Street was also the site of Maisy's Motion Picture Palace, where Darcy first envisioned his lifelong fantasy of the Wild West. "I guess everybody loved movies, but I wanted to be a cowboy. When it was Halloween time and the kids all got their costumes, I made my own Western get-up! I got a heavy-duty black plastic shopping bag and cut it up into a nice pair of chaps. I swiped some brass tacks from the newsstand and pinned them all around the edges for trim. A child can really dream about the impossible. I dreamed about it, and I had my old Rough Rider's hat, the chaps, and everything else; I was ready to go out West to Texas!"

Children at that time were expected to pull their own weight, so Darcy went to work. "My mother would send me out to shine shoes. Then I would also hang around the elevated train and collect newspapers from people coming off, and I'd sell 'em back to people getting on. Every kid had to work. There was no question about it, but right from age three I knew I wanted to be an artist. That was the work for me. At first I was a novice. I didn't know where to work, so I just drew on everything. I did chalk drawings on the street with chunks of broken wall-plaster. I used to draw on scraps of paper with the charcoal end of burnt match sticks. Not everything was electric, you know, so there were matches all over town. But I saved my money, as much as I could, here and there, and I bought a pencil of my own when I was about five years old. When I first got that pencil, I decided to become an artist. You know, it was scarce to get a pencil, but drawing was just in my genes, I guess."

The artist's most formative experience occurred when he was seven years old, deep in

SPREAD: Original story illustration, c. 1950s. Gouache on board, 24" x 32".

"The Diamond," *American Magazine*, October 1947. Gouache on board, 21" x 17".

Original story illustration, c. 1950s. Gouache on board, 36" x 24".

sleep, one summer night in 1920. He awoke after midnight in a daze, dressed himself and left the apartment to wander the streets like a sleep-walker. He followed the trolley line to Essex Street and rode the BMT all the way out to the end of the line—Coney Island. There he explored the inferno of sand and souls under burning lights, where Darcy found a lost little puppy dog. "I think he was looking for a home just like me. Well, eventually two detectives found us and asked me where I lived and drove me back home. We stood out on the landing at three in the morning and they asked me again, 'Do you live here?' And I said 'Yes, Sir,' and they said, 'Wait here,' and they went up to my door. After a while my mother comes and they say, 'Momma, How many children do you have?' And she says, 'Six,' and they say, 'Have you counted them lately?' I don't think she was too upset, but I can't imagine *why* I did such a thing. Was I asleep or awake? It was the strangest thing, because I was a scaredy-cat little kid, and here I had this great adventure and everything turned out just fine. Just like there was always a safety net down there waiting to catch me if I fell!"

In 1927 the city passed an ordinance to control the black market in the slums, and shops were required to paint the names of the owner and the business on their store windows. The sign companies were swamped with the demand from this windfall. To avoid delays and to minimize the cost for this mandated task, shop owners were happy to hire local talent, so a young neighborhood artist had his first commercial art employment. "I was right there! I could paint lettered signs so I did them by myself. I was 14 years old, but I was their man!"

On weekends the young artist walked five miles up to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where the admission was free and everything looked great. One day, he noticed a young woman studiously painting a copy of an Old Master, and he asked her how he might also qualify for that privilege. She kindly led him to the director of the Copyist Program and without presenting a portfolio or any proof as an art student, Ernest Chiriacka was generously outfitted with an easel, paints, and canvas and set before a masterwork of his own choice. The only stipulation was that he confine himself to his small rug to keep the area clean. "He told me not to move. I had to remain there and I was not to touch anything. It was great. A city kid like me painting at the Metropolitan Museum! I was a *serious* artist after that!"

While attending high school, an art instructor suggested that Darcy continue his art education after graduation in 1932 at the Mechanics Institute on 20 West 44th Street. This institution is the city's oldest tuition-free evening school for students who cannot afford a technical college education. To enter this landmark building, which overflows with a beneficence of ornate bounty, Darcy must have felt great pride to attend his three-year courses in industrial design and illustration. After graduation in 1935, the artist then enrolled in the free night classes at the National Academy of Design on

◀ Original story illustration, c. 1948. Gouache on board, 22" x 16".

"Love of Money," *Liberty Magazine*, November 23, 1946. Gouache on board, 32" x 20".

Original story illustration, c. 1960s. Gouache on board, 33" x 21".

Fifth Avenue and 89th Street, where he studied the basics of painting and drawing from the nude model in Life Class.

Darcy's freelance work, painting discount window signs, infringed on the territory of a big unionized company called "Advertisers Sign & Display," 370 Seventh Avenue. Rather than compete with this junior price-cutter, the company offered him a steady-paying but menial job to get him off the streets. This company also produced silkscreened posters to announce upcoming features at movie houses throughout the city. That line of work looked more interesting to Darcy; but as a union shop, the young artist had to wait his turn for a slot to open in that department.

By 1934, Chiriacka was 21 years old and working full-time as an apprentice art technician, doing paste-up and mechanicals. Like most Depression-era high school graduates, Darcy was determined to make it to the top. With a steady income he was able to afford the night school classes at the Art Student's League on 215 West 57th Street, where he met a wider range of dedicated artists and innovative teachers. While there, he heard about the painting classes taught by Harvey Dunn, the famous protegé of Howard Pyle, at the Grand Central School of Art. This was the most prominent art school in America at the time. They held day and evening classes in five different art disciplines, taught by 20 distinguished artists. Darcy prepared a painting to show the master for admittance to the class. He was accepted and faithfully attended Dunn's classes from 1936 until 1940. They were held in a large skylit penthouse studio on the seventh floor of Grand Central Terminal, directly under the famous limestone statue of Mercury. This was the vital heart of the metropolis, and in that era of progress, it was a special thrill for Chiriacka to enter Grand Central Terminal and join the swarming travelers that epitomized the clockwork pace of those modern times.

After two years at Advertisers Sign & Display, doing paste-up work and waiting for the promised job as an art designer, Chiriacka was hired by a non-union outfit, the Variety Display Company at 43 West 17th Street, to create his own designs for silkscreened editions of movie posters. "It was just another stepping stone for me, but it was an important job at the time. They needed posters to put in movie houses to show what was playing. It all had to do with the stars in each new film. We would look through our photo library of all the stars and I would paint the poster, then it would be silkscreened to make three or four dozen, which would be sold to all the different theaters at one time. I was making $27 a week, and that was good money. I had been keeping company with Katherine for about a year, and with my new salary, there was no reason why we shouldn't get married, so we did. But I kept right on going to Dunn's night classes, and that must have been pretty hard for a young wife."

They married in 1937 and found an apartment in Brooklyn's Prospect Park, while Darcy plowed ahead designing movie posters and taking Dunn's night school

Stevan Dohanos (1907-1994) Saturday Evening Post Original Cover Painting - June 21, 1947

Mad Magazine #89's *Frankenstein Cover Art* *by Norman Mingo - September, 1964*

Virgil Finlay's Original Cover Painting for Famous Fantastic Mysteries, Oct., 1942

Carl Barks' 1978 Original Painting of "The Caliph of Baghdad" and His Harem

Norman Mingo's Original Cover Painting for Mad Magazine #88 - *July, 1964*

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Original story illustration, c. 1950s. Gouache on board, 22" x 30".

classes for another three years. Changing tastes in the movie theaters drove the Variety Display Company out of business just as Darcy realized he had learned all he could from Harvey Dunn. "Dunn was a great painter. He was a big, tough man. He would come in at nights, and he had his pet students. One was Dean Cornwell. Mr. Dunn loved the admiration of people, but he did not encourage them to imitate him. He wanted each artist to be their own person. To think differently than others. To '*think positively*,' as he said, but not to imitate him or anyone. 'You're supposed to be doing your own thing.' I approached him once because I was confused about values. I knew I had to control my values, otherwise I'd have nothing, but I didn't know how! Dunn was abrupt. He said, 'It will either come to you or it won't. There's no method!' He was someone that you didn't just go up to ask things. He was a tough one. 'If you can continue to paint, you must study your subject with attention to the full value of the scene. Always look at the big picture! Decide on the general value range of the whole scene and then stick to it, and you'll never go wrong… provided that you put them in the right places!' After each class the paintings were stacked along the wall, and the whole group would gather around. Then Dunn would sit there with his cane and he would point it at a painting. And one time he said, 'This one is outstanding! Whose is that?' And I said, 'It's mine, Mr. Dunn,' and he said 'Oh. Well, you've got it, my boy.' That was *it*! I'd reached a point where I understood what he could teach me, and I was off on my own career!"

Finally, in 1940, Darcy took his portfolio up to Street & Smith, the grandest of the old pulp publishers, and sold the art director a sample painting of a pretty girl's head for $60, which they ran on the cover of *Love Story*. "In those days, each publishing house had a style. The artists would paint a picture 'on spec' which followed that style, and you'd bring it up to show them and they'd buy it. They'd buy it, and then you'd go out dancing!" After that first cover for the prestigious Street & Smith, Ernest Chiriacka was able to find steady work at Popular and Thrilling Publications. "I could walk right into the art director's office. They counted on me to get them a few paintings each month. I would go from one publisher to another, if I wanted to, but I became close friends with Alexander Portegal, the art director at Popular."

One day, as Darcy was leaving an art director's office, he passed two workers from the defunct Variety Display Company who were waiting in vain to apply for low-paying paste-up jobs. They were astonished to see their old co-worker had become a professional freelance illustrator. "After eight long years of night school art classes, I was finally getting ahead in life!"

With his improving status, Darcy and Katherine moved to a new apartment on MacDonough Street, near Ralph Avenue in Brooklyn. "It was a magnificent place. Everything was all *electrified*! The kitchen was all *electric*! It was a *dream* at the time! I didn't have a formal artist's studio. I just painted in the spare bedroom. It wasn't a 'studio,' but it was where I painted. In fact, I've always painted in some little

◀ **"Neptunus Rex," cover illustration for *Argosy* magazine, September 1945. Oil on Canvas, 36" x 24".**

"No More Tears," original story illustration, September 26, 1956. Gouache on board, 24" x 18".

old bedroom. My wife wouldn't put up with a fancy artist's studio in *her* house!"

After Pearl Harbor, Ernest Chiriacka reported for his Draft Board physical in 1942 at the Chief Reception Center for Inductees on Governor's Island, where he went through a battery of tests. They determined that he was pre-diabetic. He remained at the Army Post Hospital for two weeks of additional testing, and was finally confirmed *4F* for military service. His civilian clothes were returned and he was ferried back into circulation on Manhattan Island, where the artist met a whole new world of publishing, phenomenally changed by the mobilization. The established hierarchies of the American workforce were thrown into turmoil by the war's talent-drain, and Ernest Chiriacka, like Rosie the Riveter, was one of those new entrants who were eager to prove their worth.

From 1942 until 1951, Chiriacka painted over 400 pulp magazine covers for Popular, Thrilling, Ace, and Dell publications. "It was the easiest thing in the world. The magazines were begging for work. I was the *boss*. They needed good artists. I worked for them all! Where ever they displayed pulps on a newsstand, you'd see Chiriackas all along the line!"

Like most young artists of his generation, Chiriacka's sole intention was to be as big as Leyendecker or Rockwell. Haddon Sundblom and Gil Elvgren had also grown from working-class illustrators into "stars" of the popular culture, and Darcy was determined to follow. To preserve his good name for his anticipated career in the slicks, the artist masked his work for the pulps behind aliases, fictitious signatures, and unsigned work. This strategy allowed him to earn good money from the plentiful pulp jobs, while he looked for the next stepping stone to the slicks. Artists needed agents to get into the slicks, but agents would not represent artists who only did low-paying pulp jobs. So Chiriacka began a charade to obscure his pulp art career. He never signed his covers for Popular publications. For Thrilling he assumed the initials "A.D." The full name was never actually spelled out, but this allowed the fictitious "Anastassios Darcy" to moonlight for the opposition. He signed his covers for Sweetheart Stories "E. C. AckA," and he left work for other Dell publications unsigned or even masked his style, and yet the inherent flair of his draftsmanship always belied these masquerades.

An artist's "signature style" is conveyed in the actual handling of the brush; like handwriting analysis, a painting is composed of myriad telltale idiosyncrasies. When Chiriacka paints hands, they come alive with theatrical presence. Hands are one of nature's most complex and beautiful creations, and their articulation has stumped many a faltering painter into muffling their eloquence, but Chiriacka uses simple strokes to briefly define their varied planes and forms. He simplifies their infinite expressiveness into clear actions to convey his subject's anger, cowardice, or grim nonchalance. A hero's hand is loosely holding a pistol, while the graceful pinky slackens as he lights a smoke, to convey

◀ Original magazine illustration, c. 1950s. Gouache on board.

Original story illustration, c. 1950s. Gouache on board, 21" x 16".

"The Blurred Killer," *American Magazine*, c. 1950s. Gouache on board, 22" x 18".

his cool-headed poise as he faces a torrent of hot lead. Like a skilled pantomimist, the artist paints hands with emphatic personalities that are the co-stars of the hero's face and body language in Chiriacka's "theater" of silent pictures.

Although his featured characters are based on live models, his settings are generated from his imagination. The backgrounds have a mellow indistinct quality of stage design—pale and reserved—to set the scene without distracting attention from the the spotlit actor on stage-center. The colorful wardrobe in Chiriacka's "production" is chosen with the elegance of a European courtier. His delicate brushwork describes the folds, patterns, and creases of fabrics with a facile confidence. Chiriacka paints clothes as if each stroke were a pleasure in itself, flowing down the shapes like colorful streams. Every crease of clothing falls into order to briefly describe the anatomy's action. Value changes are simplified and display no worries about the optical subtleties of illusionistic painting. Although he starts with a photo of his model to supply the basic structure, the artist soon abandons that reference to focus spontaneously on the paint. He is in complete control and the viewer is treated to the delight of his compelling vision. Chiriacka seems to be tapping back into his childhood memories of dressing in homemade chaps to head out West in manly glory. What kinds of dreams about Texas shoot-outs and saloon hall gamblers went through the mind of a tiny Greek kid on the Lower East Side? Chiriacka's pulp covers bring his viewers back to the fantastic innocence of that inspired childhood play.

During the heyday of his pulp career, the artist would often work nights without sleep, and he developed a technique of painting in an free-associative manner that was favored by the Surrealists and the Abstract Expressionists for its reliance on automatic suggestion. But Chiriacka used his entrancement to unleash the flow of creativity that floods his narrative illustrations. "I thought a lot about the abstract artists who worked from their imagination. But they were way off! With me, when I'm working from my imagination, I see actual scenes with people and places and things."

Chiriacka brought the theatrical flare of a casting director to his work. His pulp covers are populated with eccentric characters thanks to his own dramatic talent and his life-long love of the cinema. "I think an artist has to learn some drama directing skills, because the job does involve setting people up here and there. Telling them, 'Do that! Do This!' and what-not. You are directing behind the scenes. I guess that's all a part of the art." Luckily, the artist's sister, Athena Lord, and her husband, Jim Boles, were themselves bit players in Hollywood, who were also available as models for Darcy's pulp covers. The talents of these professional actors contributed to the theatrical stage presence that beams from Chiriacka's illustrations.

The pulps embraced a devil-may-care attitude on every level—the stories, the colors, the actions, as well as the

Original story illustration, c. 1950s. Gouache on board, 24" x 30".

craftsmanship—as long as their eye-popping covers made the *man on the street* buy them. Although we assume tough guys like Sam Spade bought *Dime Detective*, in fact the pulps were largely marketed to adolescent boys. On the other hand, the slicks were sold by monthly subscriptions, with stories and ads aimed at the whole family—mothers, fathers, and kids—with a mass-market vision of American popular culture. Like Hollywood movie studios, the slicks developed a "star system" in which a handful of talented directors, writers, artists, and technicians worked together to routinely entertain their nationwide audience with a brandname production. *Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's*, and *Good Housekeeping* all promoted their exclusive talent in order to profit from those reputations and to entice the loyalty of subscribers. Pulp artists worked in the freelance world of every man for himself, while slick artists signed lucrative annual contracts with publishers. This meant that art directors at the slicks had to depend on art agencies to coordinate their complex legal contracts for long-term relationships with their illustrators.

In July 1950 Darcy painted a slick cover "on spec" of his young son Leonard and showed it to an agent. She thought it was great, and sold it to *Liberty* magazine. Finally, at 37 years old, the real Ernest Chiriacka could proudly sign his full name on his first slick cover illustration. The agent was Celia Mendelssohn, who, along with her brother Sidney, ran American Artists at 67 West 44th Street. They represented many top artists, like Gillette (Gil) Elvgren, for which privilege Chiriacka had to forfeit a whopping 25 percent commission. To everyone's astonishment, *Liberty* magazine abruptly folded, along with Chiriacka's August cover. "I thought, 'Hey, Holy Cow! I'm on the cover of *Liberty*! That's great news.' And they folded, right then and there, with *my* cover. It never came out! Gr-r-r! That was a dirty deal! My first slick, and it folds up!" Nevertheless, Chiriacka had successfully passed another stepping-stone, because the check had cleared and the Mendelssohns were convinced that his work was saleable in the slick market. There followed a succession of assignments for interior story illustrations and covers for *American Magazine*, *Coronet*, and *Argosy*.

Chiriacka's first pulp had earned him $60 in 1940, and after 10 years as a top artist in the pulps, his covers were still worth only $75, but after earning $1,500 for his first slick illustration, Darcy never looked back to the pulps again, nor has he ever harbored any illusions about that entire decade in his long career. "We were students of illustration and the pulp work was like our homework. The pulps did prepare us for the slicks; it made us pros. We understood the game. It was a stepping stone, but my goal was to paint like Sundblom. He was the tops in the slicks."

His first big success in the slicks was painting two pin-ups for *Esquire*. They were bound with 10 other pin-ups by six different artists to form a calendar for 1952: "The *Esquire* Girls—a dozen visions to give the New Year a beautiful start." This separately bound calendar was printed on card-stock

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Original pin-up illustration, c. 1950s. Gouache on board, 36" x 28".

Original pin-up illustration, c. 1950s. Gouache on board, 40" x 30".

and was "available at newsstands as both wall & desk sized." *Esquire* produced this lucrative special interest publication only for sale during the New Year's season, and featured it in their January issue to announce its release. Chiriacka's "visions" were apparently the most beautiful because the following year, he was commissioned to paint all "12 timely toasts" for the 1953 *Esquire* Calendar Girls, and again in 1954, he painted all of the "12 lovely ladies—plus two for good luck—for the 1954 *Esquire* Calendar." These pin-ups were boldly signed "E. Chiriaka," omitting the second "c" to streamline his name for more pizzazz.

Chiriacka is best known today for his famous *Esquire* pin-ups. His sultry women have the dignity and proportions of a classic statue of Aphrodite. Unsatisfied with the complete perfection of any single model, the artist would hire as many as six different women to assemble his vision of an ideal beauty. They are as exotic and tastefully costumed as a playful strip tease by Gypsy Rose Lee. Their flesh is sculpted in the artist's jaunty manner, so his women have a rough hewn earthiness. But the major reason Chiriacka is remembered for his pin-ups is simply because they are the major works the artist signed as "E. Chiriaka."

Darcy was always a fast painter, but story illustrations for the slicks required a composition with a cast of specific characters, and that doesn't just happen as effortlessly as his paintings appear. Each finished job would take about a week. His slick prices were high, but the preparatory work was much harder and contracted jobs were far less plentiful than pulps, so the artist soon noticed that his annual salary in the slicks would actually be lower, thanks to his exclusivity clauses. Chiriacka realized that survival in the post-war slicks was still financed by unsigned work and aliases, as much as it was in the pulps. "There was always a clash between the *Post* and *Collier's*. They'd tell us, 'If you want to work for the *Post*, you can't do any *Collier's* work!' And the *Collier's* people would say the same thing. 'If you want to do *Collier's* stuff, you're not going to be doing any *Post*!' In my case, I gave a different name on them. I don't remember which is which, but I did have two names. One for each!" For financial reasons, the Mendelssohns also encouraged Chiriacka to accept freelance work from rival slick magazines, or even to sign new "exclusive" contracts under assumed names.

This would have been a serious problem if artists actually delivered their work in person, but Chiriacka's slick illustrations were all handled by his agents. Their mediation between artist and director actually benefited all three parties. Art directors knew they could not offer all their artists enough work to survive, so the ruse of "exclusive contracts" forced artists to work discretely for the competition, and the agency enabled artists to work incognito for "Brand X." The fact that art directors preferred to work through agents is a tacit acknowledgement of this symbiosis. Thanks to

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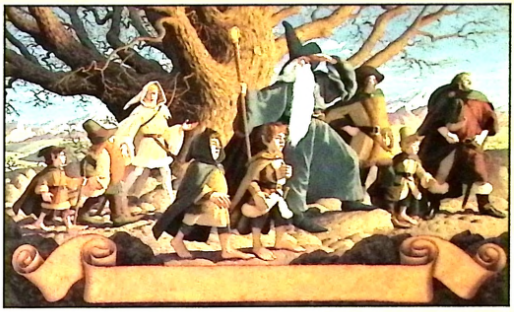

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the agents, Chiriacka was able to use as many aliases as there were clients. The Mendelssohns were the only ones to actually have a genuine exclusive contract with the real Ernest Chiriacka, because they did not want this *golden goose* to wander off with their fat 25 percent fee. If their business records still exist, the artist's career in the slicks from 1952 to 1965 may someday be reconstructed. The artist was happy to do all the slick work the Mendelssohns could find, as long as he got nice fees and they didn't kill him from overwork. They once got him up to a six-month advanced schedule of daily deadlines. Any goof up during that stint would expand like falling dominoes and delay a half-year of work. That pressure was insufferable, and they later found a balanced equilibrium with only weekly workloads of scheduled deadlines.

Over the next 13 years, the artist flourished among the slick magazines under contract and freelance, by the names Darcy, d'Arcy, E.Chiriaka, and James Fennimore Darcy Jr., continuing his chameleon habit of sacrificing his name for freelance employment with a variety of competing publishers. After a lifetime of aliases, Darcy had succeeded in becoming wealthy by working like a dog for every available publisher, but in so doing he forfeited any expectations that "Chiriaka" would become a household-name, along with his rightful place in the history of American illustration.

Ernest Chiriacka's first slick illustrations for the *Saturday Evening Post* are elaborate narrative scenes, carefully designed with idealized figures within a balanced composition. He painted in a handsome style of abbreviated realism to create convincing illusions of forms existing within a dimensional space. This style was perfected by the great American Impressionist John Singer Sargent, who premixed each stroke from his infinitely malleable colors of oil paints, while Chiriacka simply used flat colors from jars of tempera paints, but he locks those planes into a suggested depth by the bravura of his drawing strength. His later style of slick illustration reflects the glamourous art-direction of Panavision spectacles at the time, like *Pajama Game*, *Funny Face*, and *Pillow Talk*. Stylishly unreal and stunningly composed with Chiriacka's gifted facility, his graphic flair pushes the composition into formal color games with the charm and stylishness of a colorful mobile by the cheery modernist, Alexander Calder. Playful placements of brilliant fields of color are held in a sophisticated and graceful balance by Chiriacka's inherent tastefulness.

In reviewing these breath-taking slick illustrations, the artist modestly calls them, "Commercial art. We call it 'clever.' Cleverness in art should never exist. That's true! That's what Harvey Dunn said to his students. 'Too clever! You're being too clever. You have to get rid of the cleverness and get some art behind it!' And how the hell do you do that thing? Can you put those things in words? No. But with slick illustrations you have to be able to understand what you're doing, rather than to be going at something blindly, that is something else."

Original pin-up illustration, c. 1950s. Gouache on board, 38" x 30".

Original pin-up illustration, c. 1950s. Gouache on board, 36" x 24".

Chiriacka's agent showed his work to 20th Century Fox studio chief Spyros Skouras, who hired the artist to paint the movie poster for the first major CinemaScope film, *The Robe*. Not knowing how to approach this kind of assignment, Chiriacka made a color sketch to suggest a possible design concept, but instead of being commissioned to paint a full-sized finished version, Skouras said, "That's great! I'll buy it! I'll take it just like that. Wrap it up!" And Chiriacka's preliminary sketch became the final poster for this historic widescreen spectacle starring Jean Simmons and Richard Burton. This blockbuster film saved 20th Century Fox and won four Oscar nominations, and set the 1950s trend in Hollywood for swords and sandals. The innovative technology of CinemaScope was copied by all the major studios, and it temporarily enticed the American masses to turn off their television sets and go out to see the movies.

The sensation of "Pop" design was the fashion rage of the 1964 New York World's Fair, and the mass-market media were all on board. While Americans marvelled at the Space Age novelty of Pop Art, Chiriacka's long career in illustration abruptly ended. "The slick magazines just decided to cut out *all* realistic illustrations. They turned to color photography and graphic fashion design. All the artists were stranded. Up until then if you were in the slicks, you made money! But if you had spent all your money, then you were in trouble, because there was no work. Absolutely nothing you could do. The slicks stopped it cold! Nothing! Empty! Finished! What does an artist do?"

Ever since their marriage in 1937, Katherine had overseen the Chiriacka household and their two children, Leonard and Athene. She had also been the artist's valued career partner and business coordinator. When the moment came that the slicks dropped realistic illustration in favor of "Hi-Fashion" graphic design, it was Katherine who devised a survival strategy. Darcy painted landscapes and still-lifes, while she sold his work to New York galleries for resale. Soon Katherine was successful enough to open her own showroom in New York, E.C. Gallery. After two years, she had introduced Chiriacka's paintings to several prestigious galleries, and by 1970 he was showing and selling fine art paintings at the Kennedy and Grand Central Galleries in New York City and other galleries around the world.

As his children grew up, dispersed, and raised their own families, Darcy and Katherine traveled the world to visit their grandchildren. In 1980, while staying with his daughter's family in Belgium, the artist came under the influence of Monet and even painted in the Impressionists' garden in Giverny. Darcy's floral scenes of his grandchildren at play recalled his own childhood fancies. "Most kids are scared stiff, but they have their own dreams. Absolute dreams. Kids can dream anything! Nothing is inconceivable to them. Nothing!" The artist looked back to his own youthful dreams of the Wild West, which were whipped up every weekend by the Saturday morning matinee serials of William S. Hart and Tom Mix. Memories of those pistol-packin' fantasies had richly fueled his Western pulp covers, but a deeper

North Fork Pastoral, c. 2002. Oil on canvas, 20" x 24".

Family Moving Onward, c. 1986. Oil on canvas, 40" x 48".

impression is still apparent in his later paintings of the West. He read the historical accounts of real frontiersmen which resonated with the hardships of his own impoverished childhood. Chiriacka became profoundly drawn to the plight of the Native Americans after the Sioux Indian uprising at Wounded Knee in 1973. His paintings and bronze sculptures of the Native American people have a dignity that radiates with a genuine mysticism.

To create these visionary scenes, Chiriacka developed an innovative approach to painting. He sits before his canvas and absolutely rids his mind of all thoughts. He paints without plan or intention—with no conscious thought at all. "I don't know what I'm painting, but I start a painting and I work with that thing for two hours or so. No stopping. No correcting. No sitting back. I don't do anything, except continually painting, and then I can see other arms than my own, painting the picture, while I feel as if I were floating, way up above the painting, just like I was the sun floating in the sky. I feel like other arms come and help a little bit, rather than my own arms doing it. I'm lost. I'm absolutely lost. And when I am done, I recollect myself and I take my painting and I look at it, and I'm as surprised as anyone! I'd look at it for the first time. 'Hey, that looks pretty good! Did I do that? I didn't think of it.' It simply happened! If anyone else were to hear of this they would say I was kidding, but it's the absolute truth."

This fascination with entranced painting is reminiscent of the artist's childhood adventure of walking in a trance after midnight under the bright lights of Coney Island. Meaningful parallels remain between that sandy, mysterious experience of 1920 and the delicate clairvoyant mist that blows through his colorful paintings of Indians and frontiersmen in the brilliant deserts of his imaginary West. In both cases Darcy's consciousness floats away to a beautiful and exciting place with crowds of mysterious, benevolent people where "nothing bad's going to happen."

As a child, Chiriacka was protected by a trance, to venture out into the unknown of the midnight city streets, and today, he slips back into that same benevolent trance, to face the unknown of his subconscious every time he lifts his hands to make his art. "I look forward to every new empty canvas. I always feel that I'm painting but I'm floating also. I'm in space while I'm doing these things, and everything is working out fine. No problem at all." A word of caution to artists who might try this at home— bear in mind that this artist who is working in a trance is also a supremely talented and disciplined draftsman. The two qualities of free-associative creativity and masterful draftsmanship make splendid dancing partners in these evocative late paintings. Not unlike the last paintings by Degas, whose dreamy crimson impressions of women bathing almost flow away into indecipherable abstraction, except for the fact that Degas was trained by France's greatest draftsman, Ingres.

As a young man studying art and visiting the Metropolitan Museum, all the Old Masters looked great to Chiriacka. He spent his whole life applying his talent and technical discipline to each new opportunity that came along. He followed a long string of stepping stones from sidewalk graffiti to shop-window signs, to movie posters, to art classes, to pulp magazines, to pin-ups, to the slicks, and to fine art paintings and sculptures. These stepping stones have led him from poverty and uncertainty to wealth and wisdom, but through it all, he was never confused about who he was. "I was an *artist*. Yes." Today, Ernest Chiriacka has the luxury

of recognition in the art world for his fine art paintings and sculpture, but he has always been an artist, and each of his stepping stones produced its own art. His earlier career in pulp illustration can now be appreciated as one more brilliant step in that long path.

"Each one was right. Each in their own time. It's only in the manner of the steps you take to get to a certain point. Now I feel comfortable with landscape painting. I used to go out driving with another painter to find interesting scenery. Now I find I can do it a lot better indoors, without going out to paint. I paint from my imagination! That's just what's right for me now!"

At 90, Darcy is thinking about retirement but his collectors pray he never does. We can always use more of his work. The free spirit of Ernest "Darcy" Chiriacka is permanently recorded in his art for our viewing pleasure—to re-experience vicariously. "Nothing bad's going to happen. Never worry about where a painting is going; just paint! It'll all work out okay in the end. Like there's a big safety net down there waiting to catch you!" That vision of creative freedom is Darcy's inspiring gift to all art lovers.

— © 2003 by David Saunders

For more about Ernest Chiriacka, visit his website: **www.chiriacka.com**

David Saunders is an artist showing with the Fischbach Gallery in New York and Carrie Secrist Gallery in Chicago. Visit his website: **www.davidsaunders.biz**

***Mountain Trapper*, c. 1996. Oil on canvas, 64" x 48".**

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The Artists of AURORA

by Thomas Graham

The flaming *Fokker D-7* by James P. Cox had the longest shelf life of any Aurora model box art—1956 to 1976. It may be the most famous model box illustration of all time.

Aurora Plastics Corporation of West Hempstead, New York occupies a singular place in American hobby history. During the time Aurora was in business, it offered the widest variety of plastic model kits of any company, and, while its models were not the most accurate or complex, they simply were the most fun. Aurora's major competitor, Revell, Inc. of California, soberly strove for authenticity, but the men at Aurora just tried to give kids something they would enjoy building, displaying, and—yes—playing with.

However, Aurora did share one important characteristic with Revell: superb illustrations on its model packaging. Because Aurora was located within the environs of New York City, it had easy access to some of the top commercial illustrators in the country. A remarkable number of artists who are well known for their work in other fields of illustration and fine art contributed to Aurora's gallery of top-notch paintings.

Aurora's founders were entrepreneur Abe Shikes and engineer Joe Giammarino. Aurora began operations in a garage in Brooklyn before moving to a spacious new plant in West Hempstead. Their printer and art advisor throughout the company's history from 1953 to the company's demise in 1977 was George Burt, who began his printing company in a weather beaten chicken house in Fairton near the southern tip of New Jersey. Described by friends as an "unlettered genius," Burt found ways to squeeze top quality results out of the lithography process. He printed Aurora's box art on slick coated paper, resulting in a very sharp image. The paper would then be wrapped around a cardboard box and glued in place. The printed art was often referred to as a "wrap."

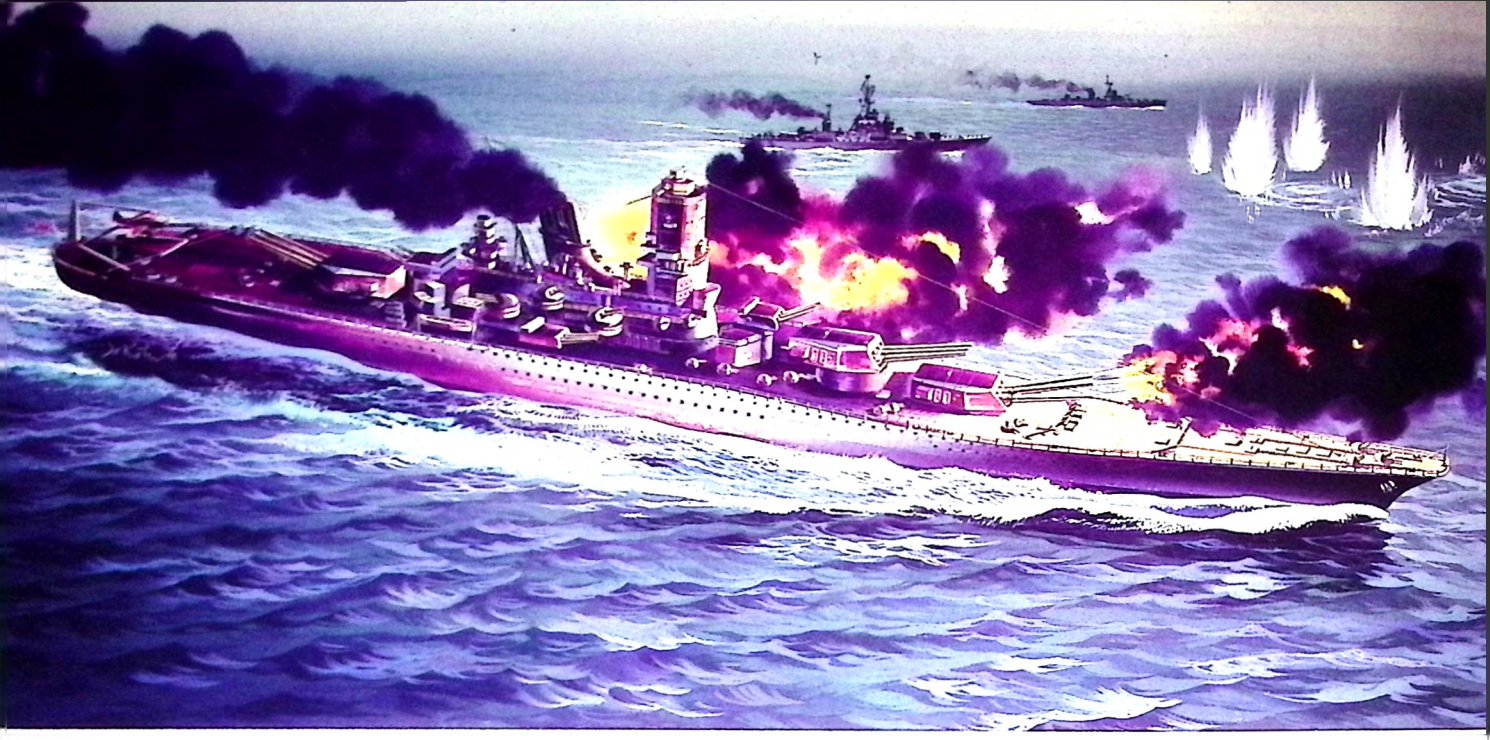
Cox's USS *Halford* box illustration captures the toy-like quality of Aurora's early model kits.

JAMES PETTIT COX

The staff artist with Burt's company was Jim Cox, a multi-skilled craftsman who handled both illustration and design concerns for the company. Cox was born in 1910 in the nearby town of Bridgeton. His mother Emma Pettit Cox had studied art at the School of Design for Women in Philadelphia and sent her son off to the Philadelphia Museum School of Industrial Art during a time when Howard Pyle and N. C. Wyeth served as inspiration for its faculty. Cox began his career as a commercial illustrator in the 1930s, working in black-and-white, doing quick line drawing and wash art for department store and real estate agency advertisements in the Philadelphia area. He even designed labels for canned and frozen foods.

When Burt began doing Aurora's model kit art, Cox assumed responsibility for the color box art, as well as the black and white instruction sheets. Although color had not been his specialty, he produced almost all the aircraft, ship, and car paintings that went on Aurora boxes during the company's first four years. Cox worked in complete anonymity since Aurora did not allow him to sign his work—although a self-portrait of his hands showing how to place decals went on all the instruction sheets! Cox's distinctively crafted instruction sheets became his enduring contribution to the hobby industry. "As I did instructions," he later explained, "I imagined a kid and his dad building the model on the floor." Cox would continue doing instruction sheets for Aurora and other hobby companies down through 1972. Thereafter he engraved scrimshaw on plastic buttons for his own company. In 1993 he passed away in his home town.

Aurora's utilitarian instruction sheets possessed a 3-D quality that set the standard for the model industry.



The Japanese super battleship *Yamoto* by Kotula.

JO KOTULA

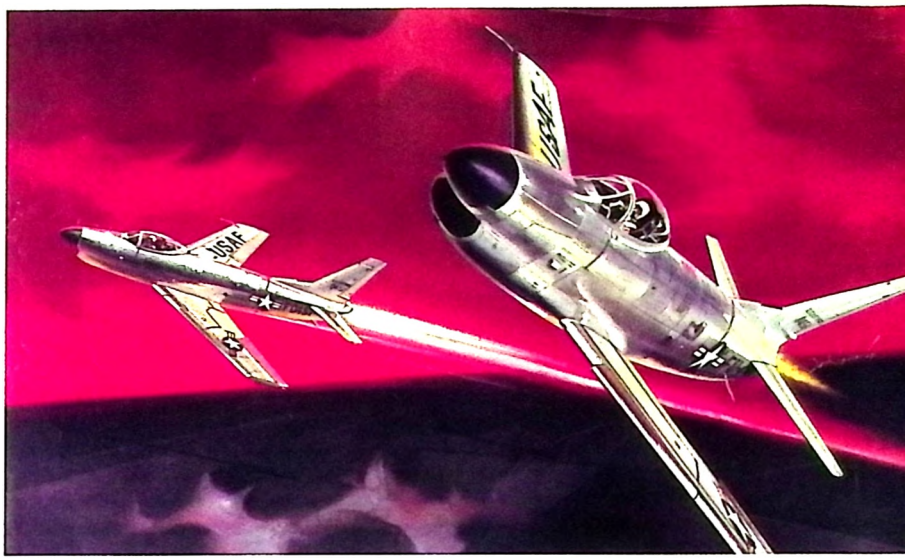
The executives at Aurora did some of their planning at informal lunch meetings in one of the plant's conference rooms. While munching on deli sandwiches, washed down with Cokes, they would toss around ideas for future projects. Al Burt often sat in. One day Burt showed everyone an Aurora kit box with a front cover from *Model Airplane News* magazine wrapped around it. How would this do for box art, he asked? The collective response was "Wow!" Burt hurried to telephone the magazine cover artist, Jo Kotula, and asked him: "How would you like to do a painting a week for Aurora for the rest of your life?"

Jose[z?]f Kotula was born in 1910 in Silesia, which was then a part of Germany. He immigrated to the United States as a youngster and became enthralled by the romance of flying in the "Golden Age of Aviation." Soon he was a pilot himself, but he also sketched pictures of airplanes, find-

Kotula liked to put human figures into his paintings. This composition shows the operating features of Aurora's *C-119 Flying Boxcar* model.

ing inspiration in the blazing combat art of World War I pilot Clayton Knight. In 1932 the youthful Kotula landed the position as cover illustrator for *Model Airplane News*. The magazine's editor asked him for pictures with what Kotula called "that brilliant sunset quality... I tried for some jarring color contrasts on the plane because that was our game—to catch the eye on the newsstands."

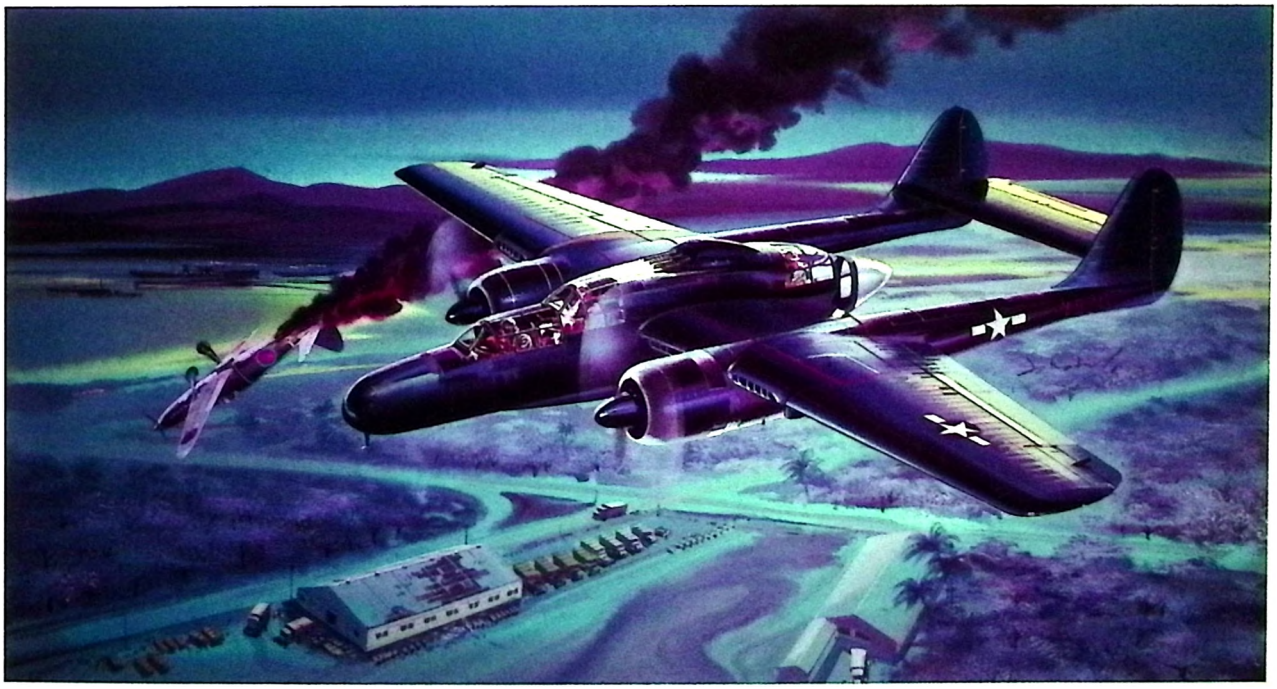
Aurora's Giammarino drove out to visit Kotula in his Morristown, New Jersey studio. He explained that he wanted lots of action on the model kit packaging. "When I see the box," Giammarino declared, "I want to get the feeling that I should duck!" Kotula joined some of the lunch meetings at the West Hempstead plant, where he received general instructions regarding box layout and dimensions. When Aurora had a new model in the works, sometimes they could supply Kotula with photos of the model prototype, but often he had to use his own reference library to locate pictures of the subject. Other than that, Aurora left him free to create and never rejected a single one of the illustrations he submitted. For simple subjects he received $350, but for complex compositions the fare rose to $1,200.



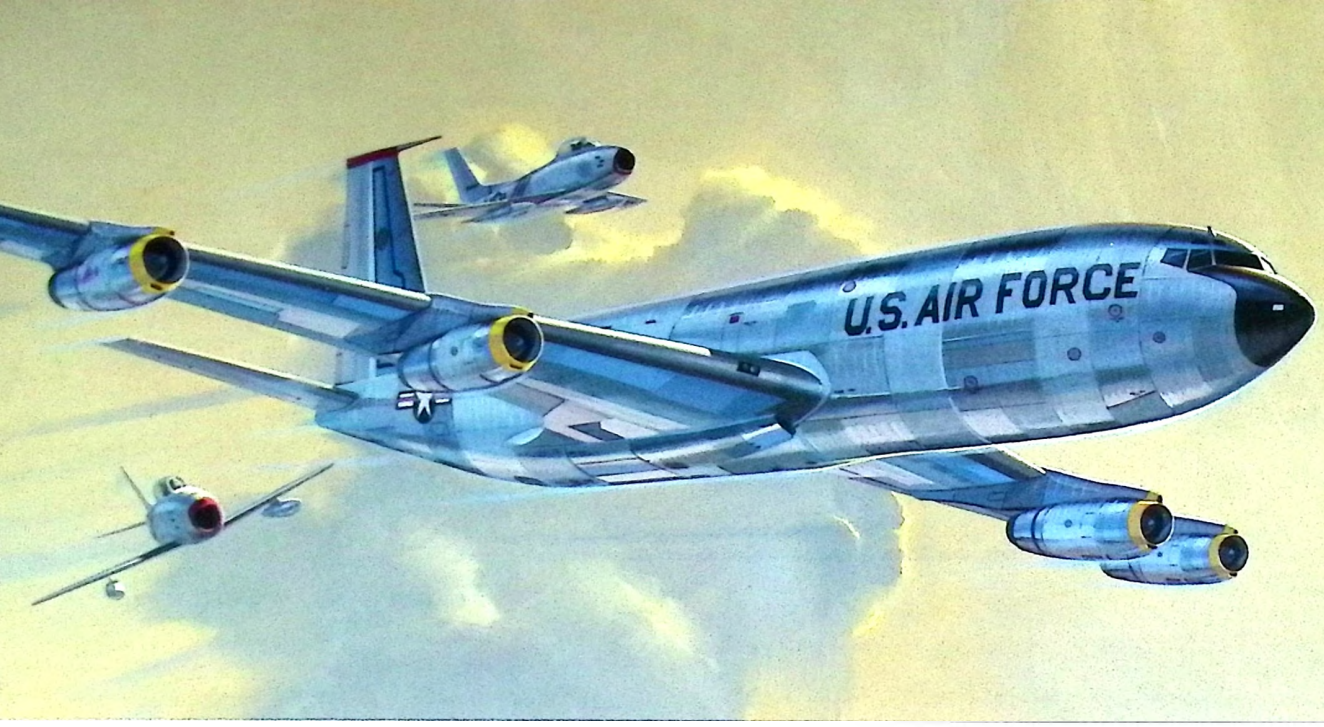
Jack Leynnwood called Kotula "a colorist with no inhibitions." This is his rendering of the *F-86D* for Aurora.

Kotula, like most illustrators, worked with opaque watercolors—gouache. Because of its white base color, gouache reflects light well and is easily reproduced by lithography.

It also flows on art board quickly, can be "erased" with a damp cloth, and dries rapidly. These qualities suited Kotula's artistic predilections. He had grown up under the influence of French impressionism and aimed to avoid anything too mechanical or detailed. He felt that an artist could not hope to compete with the camera lens—and should not even try since too much obsession with accuracy leads to a static composition. He would launch a painting by applying a thin color wash over the whole board, then, using a photograph for reference, he would pencil in the outline of his subject. To achieve a "meaty, gutsy quality," he layered on the gouache, "being a little free with my brush strokes." When a painting was completed, Kotula would rent an airplane and fly his latest creation to Burt's printing plant in South Jersey for personal delivery.



The *P-61 Black Widow* was one of the last paintings Kotula completed for Aurora.



Leynnwood's magnificent portrayal of the Boeing *KC-135*.

JACK LEYNNWOOD

In May of 1961 Bill Silverstein, Aurora's advertising manager and all-purpose bright idea man, received a letter from two California free-lance illustrators: Jack Leynnwood and John Steel. The letter explained that they had been redoing the packaging art for Revell and offered their services to Aurora as well. Silverstein felt that Aurora's 1950s-style box design and art work needed to be "refreshed," while Giammarino added that he was familiar with the ship paintings Steel had created for Revell and liked them much better than the seascapes Kotula had done for Aurora. Steel traveled to New York to meet Silverstein, but after that Aurora and its new team of artists did business by air mail.

Leynnwood and Steel would mail comprehensive color sketches to Silverstein for his comments. Sometimes the reply would be: "Great… Nothing to change, everything just fine." Other times Silverstein would have quite specific recommendations. On the comp for Leynnwood's Thunderbird: "Suggest you use concrete road with white and gray tones to bring the car out more." On the Boeing 727: "Suggest you get a ¾ front view with the emphasis on the three jet pods…the more exciting visual points." Leynnwood and Steel would incorporate the desired changes into their finished paintings, then overnight express them to Aurora. By the fall of 1961 Silverstein was writing: "I think every piece of art work you have sent us is outstanding and will certainly enhance the appearance of our company's line."

Leynnwood was a Californian by birth, a child prodigy musician, and a natural artist. During World War II he flew in the Army Air Corps and did some poster art for the military. After the war he attended the Art Institute for Design in Los Angeles and became a staff illustrator for Northrup Corporation, the aerospace company. Once he had established a reputation, Leynnwood went freelance and did illustrations for all sorts of clients—even pin-up art for the sort of calendars that hang in auto repair garages. Aurora felt that Leynnwood's "tight" style suited subjects like sleek sports cars and jet aircraft.

Leynnwood had long admired Jo Kotula's work. He considered him a pioneer in aviation art and praised him as "a colorist with no inhibitions." For his part, Kotula had no regrets about being displaced from Aurora and expressed admiration for John Steel's ship paintings. Kotula continued doing covers for *Model Airplane News* down to 1970, as well as box art for other model companies and a wide variety of other commissions. Kotula later remarked that he always had kept his hand in with portraits and landscapes, but everyone seemed to have him pegged as a painter of airplanes. In 1998 he passed away, having continued painting up to the end.

The final *Thunderbird* box art contrasts a black car against a light gray concrete road.

When Leynnwood's comp for the P-47 (above) didn't provide enough visual "pop," he switched to silver for the final art (final package design, right).

Aurora's art director asked him to accentuate the engine pods of the Boeing 727, so Leynnwood created a night scene and threw a spotlight on the engines.

Steel's Sherman Tank illustration was originally created to fit a horizontal "long box" format. It was reworked later to fit a new square box shape in the 1970s.

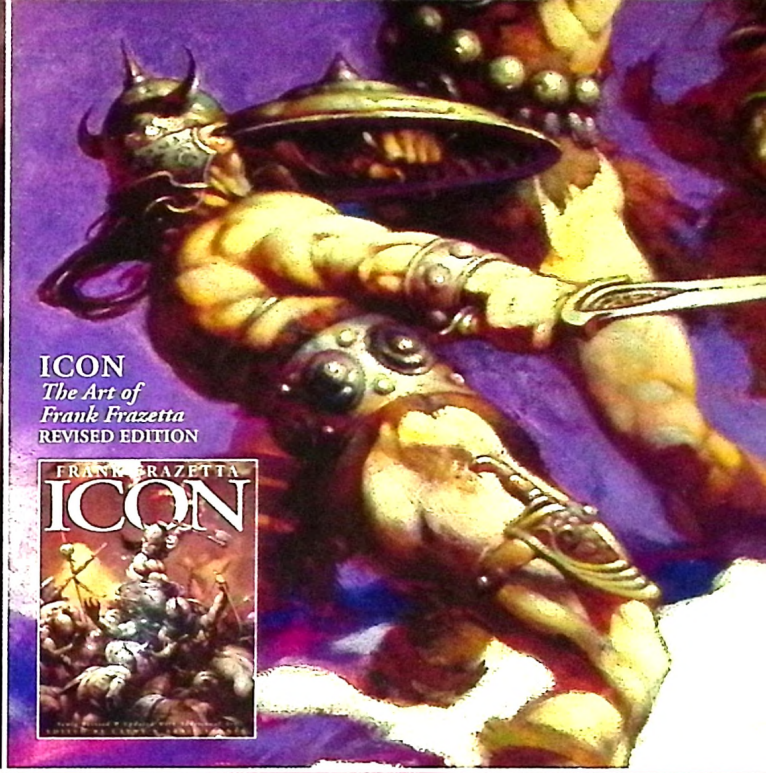
JOHN STEEL

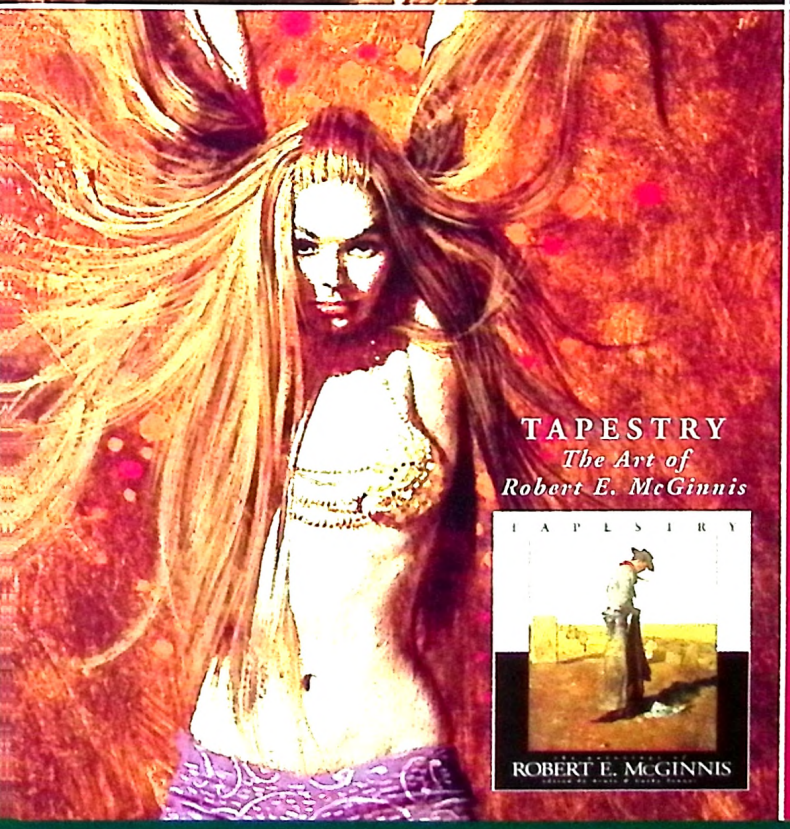
John Steel came to Aurora pegged as a ship painter, although he was competent in many genres of illustration. In fact, he was perhaps best known at the time for his covers on *Skin Diver* magazine. Aurora put Steel to work on ships, of course, but also used his talents in wraps for aircraft, army tanks, figure kits, and wildlife models. Silverstein considered Steel "very professional and an excellent artist—outstanding." Steel labored very hard on his intricate ship paintings, and Aurora paid him more than its other artists, but that still came to only about $1,000 per piece.

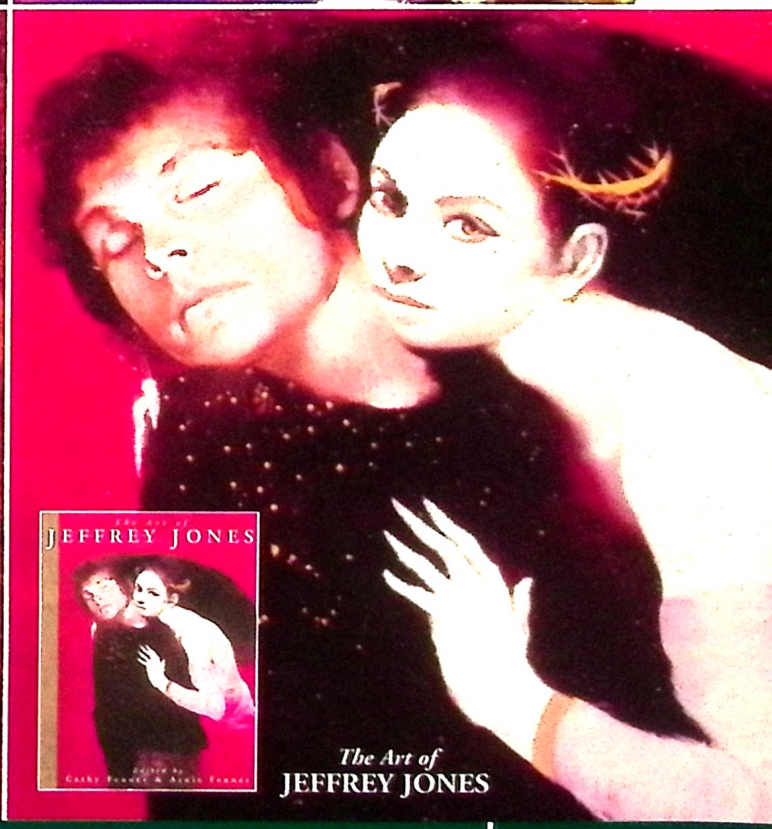
Although Steel, who had been born in New York City in 1921, was an accomplished musician and linguist, he relished the manly life of the Marine Crops. After fighting in the South Pacific in World War II, he returned for more service in the Korean Conflict—always finding himself in the midst of the bloodiest combat. In the mid-1960s the Vietnam War beckoned, and he returned to the scene of battle as a photographer and artist. This ended his career as an illustrator of model kits, and when he returned to California in the 1970s, he settled down to life as a wildlife artist and outdoorsman. He passed away in 1998, just a year before Jack Leynnwood.

In the 60s, Steel's art replaced Cox's on most Aurora WWI aircraft model boxes.

Steel's "gutsy" style suited Aurora's armor kits very well.







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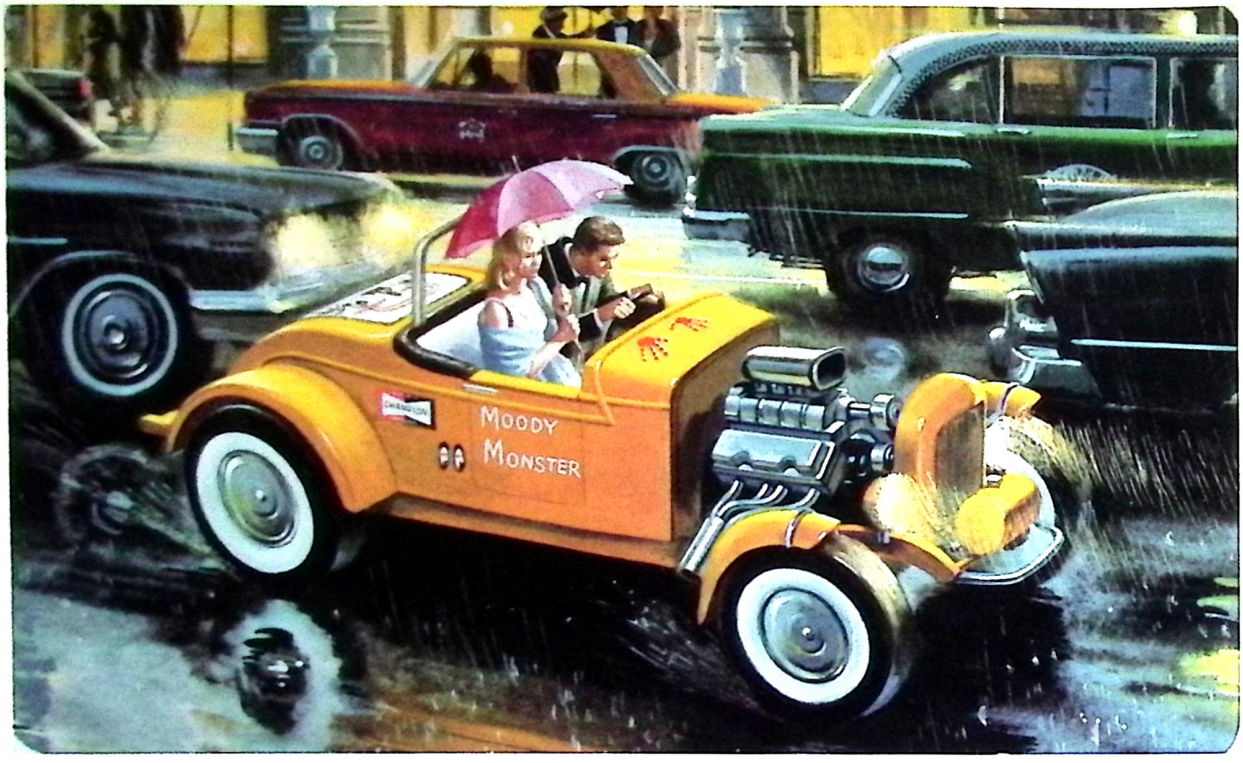


Künstler's series of hot rod illustrations always had a sense of humor.

Künstler with James Bama

MORT KÜNSTLER

Another artist brought into the Aurora stable in the early 1960s was Mort Künstler. He had been born in Brooklyn in 1931, and spent a lot of his early years indoors with childhood illnesses. This gave him plenty of time to draw, and both his father and mother encouraged his natural talents with a pencil. He grew up to be a robust star basketball player at Brooklyn College, and even transferred to UCLA on a scholarship. But when his father suffered a heart attack, Künstler returned home and enrolled in Pratt Institute to study art. From there he entered the world of commercial art in the New York City area, doing action scenes for a wide variety of magazines.

George Burt spotted a dramatic picture of an airplane on a men's adventure magazine cover, searched out Künstler, and invited him to the Aurora plant to meet Bill Silverstein. His first assignment was to execute six new covers for some of Aurora's early-issue World War II fighter kits. Künstler liked Aurora's practice of giving him several paintings to do in one batch, and then allowing him the time to produce them at his own pace.

His first problem was finding good reference material on the planes. His close artist friend James Bama introduced him to aviation writer Martin Caidin, who owned an extensive file of aircraft photos. That proved very helpful, but Künstler did not want to work directly from photographs. He knew that many artists simply used a photo of an airplane parked on the ground as the starting point for their paintings, but he felt that even when the aircraft was pictured in the sky, it still had the feel of a plane parked on three wheels. "It lacked that certain look. If you are looking at a real plane, it looms at you when you are close to it. There are no photos that give you that dramatic angle."

So Künstler built each of the Aurora plane models and used them as his artist's models. "I'd take the model and hold it close and shut one eye. I would hold the model at dramatic angles. Then I got a camera that could take close-up pictures—so close that it would fuzz out. But I would get the general idea, and then I knew the details to fill in." At this point he would make a sketch (or perhaps use a photograph), project it on to his art board, and pencil in the outline. "Let's take advantage of modern technology, but not let it control us."

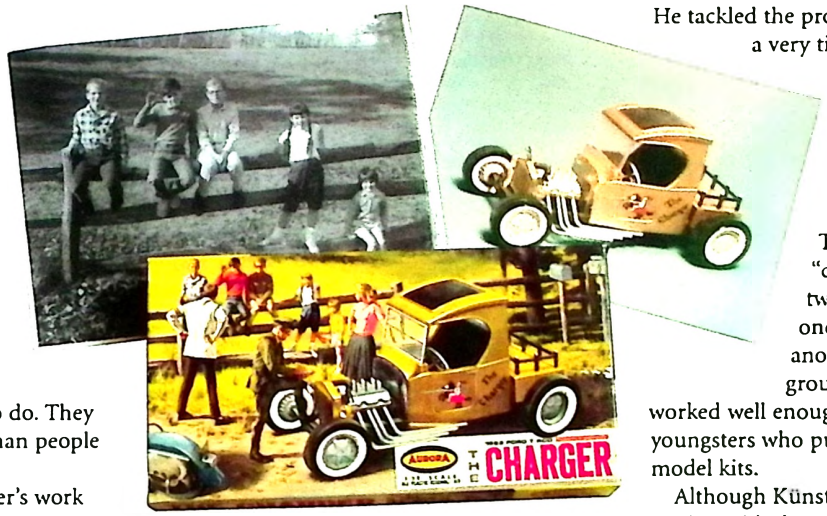
The next step would be to prepare the illustration board. "The first thing I'd do was to wet the whole board down; then lay in the colors, and you would get this nice flow of

Kunstler's *Wheeler Cruiser* displays his touch with nautical subjects.

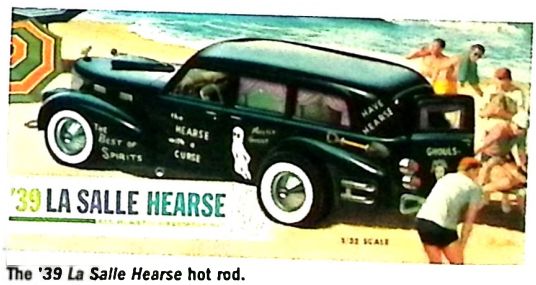
The *B-25* was Kunstler's most expensive piece of art for Aurora: $750.

colors that looked almost like they were airbrushed." Because the sky had been done in diluted watercolors, the pencil outline of the plane showed through the color wash. From that point on the rest was easy. "These aircraft pictures generally took me two days. They were very easy to do. They were so much easier than people it is not even funny."

Aurora liked Künstler's work so much that the company used him for a variety of subjects, including figure kits, but the Aurora models that he is most remembered for today are the tiny 1/32 scale hot rods. These posed several problems. First, like any good illustrator, Künstler believed every picture should tell a story—but how to do it on such a small canvas? Another difficulty was that Aurora could supply Künstler only with photos of the model prototypes, and these were shot from an elevated angle. Nevertheless, that was why Aurora had engaged Künstler: he had a knack for handling complex compositions.



Künstler used photos to assist with composition. The boy waving is his son; the girls are his daughters; the woman in pink is his wife; and the cop is the artist himself.



The '39 *La Salle Hearse* hot rod.

He tackled the problem by making a very tight pencil sketch of the car and its setting to see how linear and perspective difficulties might be handled. Then he simply "cheated" by using two horizon lines, one for the car and another for the background. The illusion worked well enough to please the youngsters who purchased Aurora model kits.

Although Künstler enjoyed working with the men at Aurora, he was getting only about $450 per painting and working very hard. In 1965, *National Geographic* hired him to produce two illustrations for an article about the founding of America's Oldest City, St. Augustine, Florida. Künstler traveled to Florida and worked with historians to determine authentic details of the historical events to be portrayed. "It was such fun! It changed my whole viewpoint." Soon he was painting panoramic historic scenes and then episodes from the Civil War—something which he continues to do with great success today.

Bama used a publicity photo from the silent movie "Orphans of the Storm" as reference for his *Guillotine* box art.

Bama's *Frankenstein* kicked off a series of classic monster portraits on Aurora kits.

Bama's wife Lynne got a kick out of posing as the Aurora *Witch* model.

JAMES BAMA

In 1963 Aurora issued a figure model of Frankenstein's monster from the classic 1930s Universal Pictures horror movie. At the time this was considered a risky venture testing the limits of suitability for a product aimed at youngsters. Seeking an illustrator to create a portrait of the monster for the kit box, Aurora's art director Si Friedman went to Charles E. Cooper Studio. The assignment was given to Jim Bama, an artist with a first-rate reputation for handling faces and figures.

A native son of Manhattan, Bama grew up reading comic strips with pictures that told tales of excitement—action-filled adventures like Tarzan and Flash Gordon. As a teenager he aspired to become an artist with the technical skills of Norman Rockwell, and make distinctive portraits of interesting people. He also became a sports fanatic; so baseball and football heroes ranked high on his agenda of paint-worthy subjects. After service in the Army Air Corps in the war, he studied under Frank J. Reilly at the Art Students League, and then went into commercial illustration. One of his closest friends was fellow illustrator and sports enthusiast, Mort Künstler.

Bama relished the task of doing Frankenstein for Aurora because it rekindled stirring memories from the past. "I tried to recreate the excitement I remembered as a child when I saw the movies." After Aurora's Frankenstein model kit turned into a top-selling sensation, kits of Dracula, the Wolf Man, and the other memorable movie monsters followed. Bama went to Culver Pictures and secured old movie still photos as reference material for his box illustrations. When some kids complained that the pictures on the kit boxes did not match the models inside, Aurora started giving Bama photos of the model prototypes to work from.

At the same time that Bama supplied Aurora with rousing covers for its kit box lids, he also furnished Bantam Books with equally vigorous covers for its paperback books in the *Doc Savage* and *Star Trek* series. The model box art and book covers made millions for Aurora and Bantam, but netted Bama only $300 per piece from Aurora, and Bantam's pay topped out at $750. When Aurora began turning its monsters into cartoonish characters driving hot rod cars, Bama protested that his talents were wasted on such "corny garbage." He did a few of the monstermobiles "under duress," but then called it quits. One day Si Friedman slipped into Cooper Studio during lunch break with two more monster proposals and left them on Bama's desk in the hope that he would take the assignment—but Bama had endured enough.

In 1968 James Bama moved to Wyoming—an astounding resettlement for a New York City boy—but the transplantation proved a remarkable success. He gradually shifted his efforts into the field of fine art, with an emphasis on Western subjects. Today he is recognized as a leader in American portraiture.

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Comprehensive color sketch of the Bell *UH-1B* by Roy

ROY GRINNELL

Roy Grinnell is currently a noted artist in both the Western genre and aviation fields. In the mid-1960s he was making a living as a commercial illustrator in New York City, working for the Frank Koste Company on Madison Avenue. Whenever a request for aviation art came in to the office, the assignment usually went to Grinnell. In those days he often received commissions from a variety of hobby companies, including Aurora. For a Navy veteran and airplane enthusiast, such tasks were a pleasure. "It was fun," he later recalled.

Grinnell had been born in California and trained at the Art Center School for Design in Los Angeles. Just prior to moving to New York, he had been on the technical art staff of the Martin Company of Florida, an air and space corporation. When Aurora made consignments with Koste for model kit box art, Aurora would furnish the artist with the box dimensions, indicating where the lettering and other graphics would be placed. Grinnell would then do a quick "color sketch" to submit for approval before going on to the finished work. He did only about a half-dozen box wraps for Aurora, but they are among the best remembered.

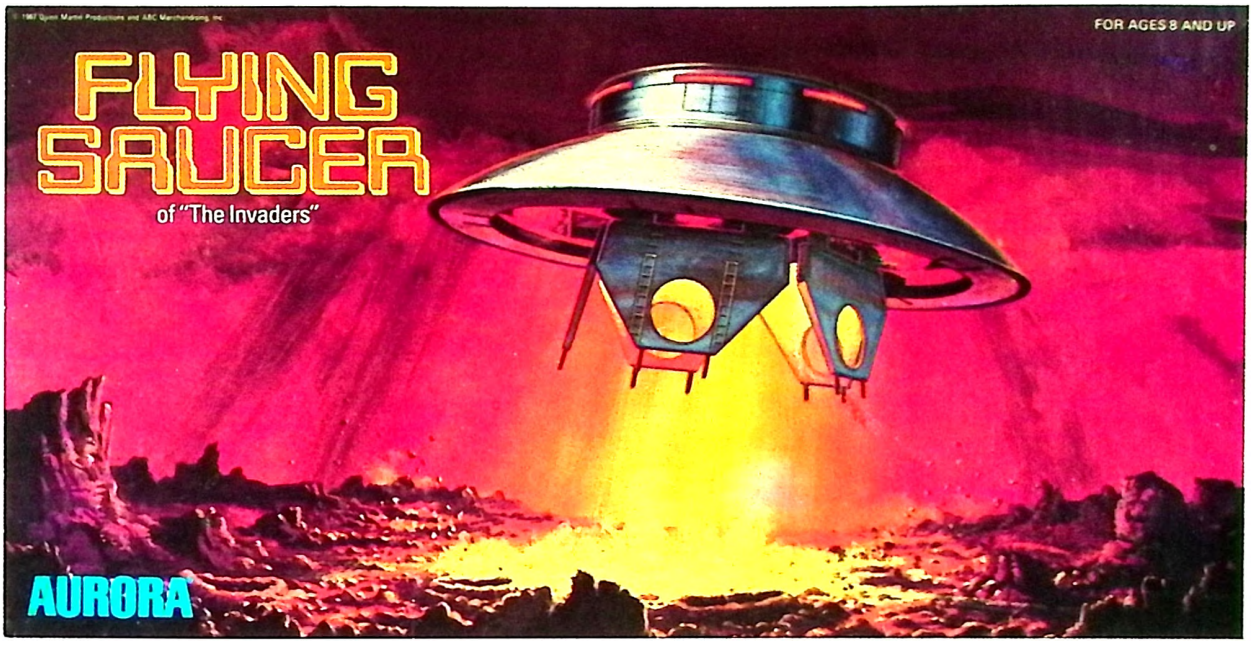
Final box art for the Bell *UH-1B* by Grinnell.

JOHN AMENDOLA

Aurora had built its reputation by selling simple, inexpensive model kits to younger kids, but by the late 1960s the industry was trending toward more accurate, authentic models. That trend certainly suited the model enthusiasts who worked in Aurora's research and development department. They wanted Aurora to upgrade the quality of both its models and the illustrations that went on the kit boxes. One of the R&D men telephoned John Amendola and asked for help with the box art.

Amendola had been born in Glendale, part of the metropolitan New York area, and grew up during the Great

Grinnell took a stylized "comic book" approach to the art for the *Batplane*.



By the 1970s Aurora had switched to a rectangular trademark and put Amendola's new art on its scl-fi kits.

Depression reading books illustrated by Howard Pyle and N. C. Wyeth. Sketching had the advantage of being a hobby that didn't cost anything. He loved airplanes and built lots of flying models. So it was a natural step to enroll in the Academy of Aeronautics in New York and then in the Air Force. Although he had flying experience, he lacked the requisite college degree to become an Air Force pilot and transferred to the Army. Following his discharge in 1953, he studied at the Pratt Institute, then moved to California and trained some more at the Art Center School for Design. He found his niche in aviation art.

As a flyer himself, he took great care in his paintings of airplanes and prided himself on the accuracy of his depictions. When Aurora gave him assignments, he would first thoroughly research the subject to get the details rights. Then he would begin by making a series of small pencil sketches to see what layout had the most appeal. After that he progressed to a larger sketch that resolved any problems with perspective. Once he was satisfied with the composition, he projected the image of his sketch on illustration board with a camera lucida, penciled in the outlines, and moved on to the color phase of the painting. He worked in gouache and acrylics.

Aurora went out of business in 1977, but Amendola continued to paint model kit box art through the 1990s, although by this time his primary employment was with Boeing Corporation in Seattle, Washington, where he now lives.

Amendola prided himself on the accuracy of his aircraft paintings; he also knew that orange sells kits.

Schaare's *Swedish Tank* embodies color and motion.

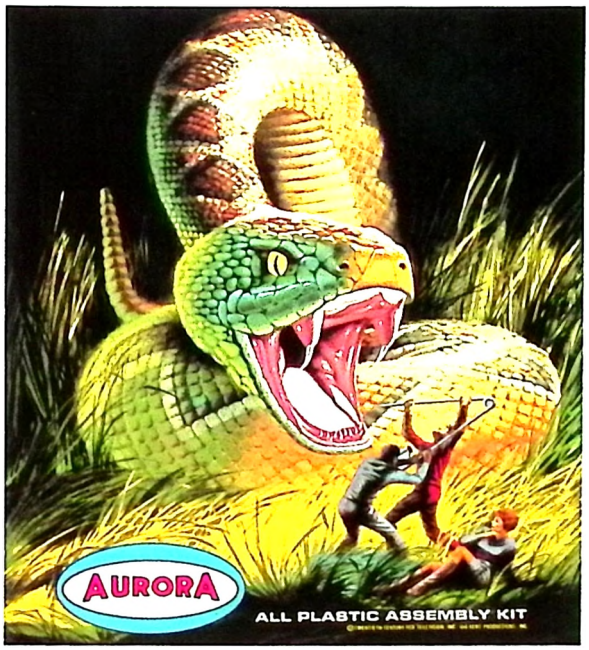
HARRY SCHAARE

Harry Schaare was born in Jamaica, New York in 1922. As a youngster he was an enthusiastic and meticulous builder of stick-and-tissue flying model airplanes. When World War II came around, he graduated to flying the real thing, C-47 Dakotas, both on the home front and in Europe. When the war concluded, he returned to his interrupted studies at Pratt Institute, and then went directly into commercial art. His earliest commissions were covers for pulp Western paperbacks, but he took whatever came his way, whether it was the *Saturday Evening Post* or one of the hairy-chested men's magazines that were popular in the 1950s.

An art agent working for Aurora contacted Schaare in 1967 and asked him to paint box wraps for some of Aurora's new kits and update the art on others. Public tastes were being radically altered at the time. Long hair, bell-bottom trousers, flower-power hippies, and psychedelic colors subverted the button-down conservatism of the 1950s and earlier '60s. In model kit box art, realism was out, and looser, jazzier treatments were in. Schaare normally aimed for realism, but he possessed the flexibility to alter his style to suit the requirements of the moment. Also, at just $300 a pop, he wasn't going to linger very long over Aurora's assignments. His favorite paint medium, however, remained traditional: milk-based casein that flowed on easily and dried rapidly.

In 1972, Schaare received a call from Addar, a new model company organized by former Aurora president Abe Shikes and some other ex-Aurora workers. They asked him to produce packaging art for the new corporation's line of kits, most notably a set of figure models based on the hit movie *Planet of the Apes*. This proved to be his last work in model kits, and a few years later Schaare went West, following the lure of a boom in the popularity of Western art. Today he resides in the artist-friendly city of Sedona, Arizona.

By the 1970s Aurora wanted a more impressionistic look, and Schaare obliged with his Japanese *I-19* Submarine.



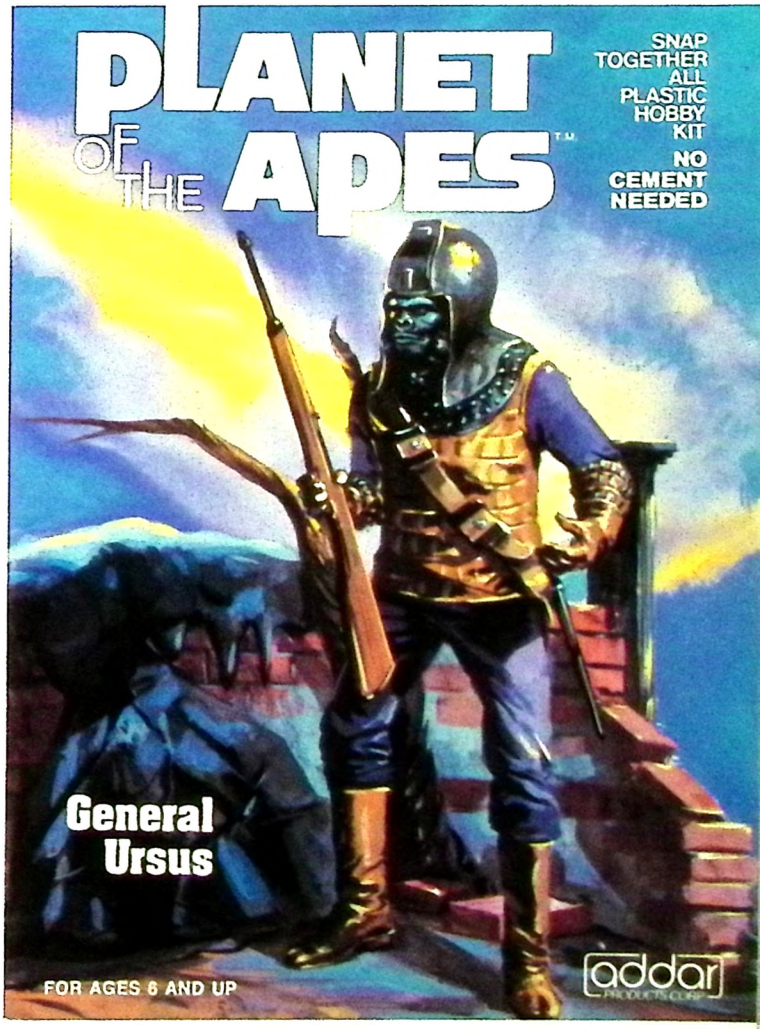
Schaare's *Giant Snake* seems about to explode from the box top.

THE AURORA LEGACY

Photography replaced painted illustration on most plastic model kit boxes in the 1970s as companies attempted a clean, contemporary look. But in the 1990s, illustration art made a comeback. A new generation of artists, many armed with airbrushes, gave a new flair to this specialized field of graphic art. Yet any veteran model maker cruising the aisles of a hobby shop today can, every now and then, spot a new model box with art work done years ago by people like John Steel and Jack Leynnwood. A recently-founded company Polar Lights even specializes in reproducing the kits and box art of the classic 1960s Aurora models. Good art stands the test of time.

— © 2003 by Thomas Graham

Tom is the author of Remembering Revell Model Kits *by Schiffer Books.*



The ex-Aurora men who ran Addar did not forget the great work Schaare had done for them.

4
ANCH

An Interview with William George

by Daniel Zimmer

In over 50 years as an artist, William George has created work in almost every genre of commercial illustration: comic book and paperback covers, record album sleeves, slick magazine illustrations, portraiture, and fine art. He has worked for publishers such as Prentice-Hall, Dell, and Bantam; Capital, Reprise, and Warner Records; and his work has appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Reader's Digest*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Argosy*, and *Cavalier* magazines. He has painted the portraits of celebrities such as Charlton Heston, Raquel Welch, Ursula Andress, and Peggy Lee; and has worked in the film industry on such movies as *The Wild Bunch*; *Hush, Hush, Sweet Charlotte*; *Four for Texas*; and others. As the profession has changed over the years, Bill has rolled with the punches, reinventing and redefining his career to fit the needs of each new client.

William George in his studio, 2003

While his output of commercial work has declined recently, Bill's fine art career has continued to blossom. He entered the Western art market in the mid-1970s and quickly found an enthusiastic audience. He has enjoyed the freedom to create his own pictures without the pressures of deadlines or art director's restrictions, and continues to paint every day. His work is currently represented by the Sierra Galleries in Tahoe City, and the Mountain Trails Gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He has also been included in the prestigious Tucson Miniatures Show. Lately, he has been spending his time overseeing the production of limited edition giclée prints of his most famous cover art and fine art pieces.

The following interview, conducted by telephone in July 2003, is a fascinating account of George's journey as an artist and illustrator.

AN INTERVIEW WITH WILLIAM GEORGE

Dan: Let's start at the beginning. Tell me about your early days and your education as an artist.

Bill: Drawing and sketching was something I enjoyed from the time I was seven years old. I had no particular dreams until, at the age of 16, my high school art teacher cornered me and said, "Bill, you're going to art school!" I didn't have a clue as to what she was talking about. I didn't even know what art school was.

I was born and raised in Torrance, California, and went to Torrance High School. My teacher told me to go home and get the money and she would make all the arrangements. Because of that teacher, I spent a wonderful summer at Chouinard Art School here in Los Angeles. I had grown up in a small town, so this was my introduction to the sophistication of the art world. My father was an electrician and my mother did not work outside the home. However, my mother subscribed to all the great magazines—*Ladies Home Journal*, *McCall's*, *Collier's*, and of course, *The Saturday Evening Post*. It was the illustrators in those magazines that so inspired me.

I was able to spend a second summer at Chouinard's, and, upon graduation from high school, Mrs. Chouinard offered me a scholarship. I leaped at this chance because it was then that I knew I wanted to be an artist—but I was also scared. I spent probably a year and a half at Chouinard's and then transferred to Jepsen Art Institute. Jepsen had taught

◀ *Buckaroo Cowboy*, August 2001. Oil on canvas, 36" x 24".

at Chouinard Art School where, incidentally, Pruett Carter taught for 15 years from the late 1920s until 1941 or '42. Jepsen, of course, knew Carter quite well. He brought together this important group of instructors, the main star was Nicolai Fechin. Jepsen was the finest figure draftsman in the country at that time... he was a dazzling artist, but interestingly, he never went on to become a professional illustrator. When I asked him about this, he said, "Bill, I was afraid. Mrs. Chouinard offered me a teaching position and here I've remained."

At Jepsen's I met a young man named John Bean and we became good friends. John told me he knew Norman Rockwell and Dean Cornwell, and that he had posed for Rockwell as a boy scout. Well, I just about fell off of my art school bench when he told me that! Up to that point, I had never had any contact with anyone who knew such great illustrators. So, John took me over to Clyde Forsythe's studio in Alhambra just east of Pasadena. Clyde and Norman Rockwell were close friends in New York City and, as illustrators, they shared space together in New Rochelle. It was Clyde Forsythe who pushed Norman Rockwell to go down to the *Saturday Evening Post* and show his work and, as you know, the rest is history. Shortly after that, Clyde Forsythe and Frank Tenney Johnson (who was also an illustrator in New York and went on to become a famous Western painter) came out to California together where they set up their respective studios in Alhambra. When they came West, Norman Rockwell and Dean Cornwell would stay and paint at Clyde Forsythe's studio. When John Bean took me over to see the studio it was like a religious experience. On the wall were original drawings and small paintings and one large painting by Norman Rockwell—a painting of a horse and buggy. It was a long, horizontal painting of a grandmother and a little girl seated in the buggy with a big white horse. I was awestruck.

Over in the corner was a large original painting by Dean Cornwell, a portrait of Admiral Nimitze, one of the Pacific Commanders of the Navy during WWII. The painting was done for Timkin Roller Bearings (1944) and the reproduction appeared in all the major magazines—*Life*, the *Post*, *Collier's*, you name it. As I was looking at the painting, my friend John said, "This isn't the painting you remembered. This was Cornwell's first attempt." The painting was similar to the reproduction, but he told me that Cornwell was so dissatisfied with it because he felt like he was painting with little finicky brush strokes and he wanted to be bolder. He abandoned it and started another one. As a young 18-year old artist, seeing that original art just blew me away.

One day, John announced he was going to Boston and wanted me to have two original pieces of art by Rockwell—one was a full tonal charcoal drawing 10" x 20" signed "Norman P. Rockwell," dated 1912 (when Rockwell was 18), and an oil sketch of *Uncle Remus*. I protested that he shouldn't give me the art, that they were valuable. He hesitated and then said, "O.K., give me a buck." (A year ago, I sold the painting at auction for $40,000.)

Pruett Carter had a wonderful exhibit of his own illustrations and he gave a magnificent talk at Jepsen Art School. Carter was a delightful man, a true gentleman. I took a summer class with him at Chouinard a few years later. He had just come back for that summer, so apparently they had persuaded him to come in for a couple of months.

Another of Jepsen Art School's incredible faculty members was Rico Lebrun. Lebrun was an astonishing artist, but he was truly an avant garde artist at the time in the manner of Pablo Picasso. Both his artwork and his teaching were incredibly dynamic. However, his influence at the art school literally destroyed the traditional approach to art. The result was a whole new faculty. Lebrun's free style teaching was less inhibiting in many respects. But you know, it became an easy method for me, and I finally said to him, "What do I do with this art? Where do I go?" Lebrun said, "Bill, you've got to make it harder for yourself." When I heard that, I thought, "Uh oh!" I wanted art to become easier, not harder.

At home, I started working on samples. One of my instructors, Russ Harte, who directed his own commercial art studio, taught an evening advertising class. When I showed my samples to Russ, he offered me a job. I was paid $150 a month. That was the most thrilling moment of my life, to believe I could actually make a living as an artist. I spent three years at Russ Harte's studio.

I was working in my little cubbyhole when one of my coworkers stuck his head in the room and said, "Bill, Norman Rockwell is out in the hallway." We all rushed to the door and there he was, the great illustrator, talking to the building superintendent about studio space. Oh, my God! I couldn't believe that Norman Rockwell would be in the studio right next to us. It was so exciting!

Well, as it turned out, Rockwell was offered space at Otis Art Institute one block away on Wilshire Boulevard—a beautiful attic studio with a huge skylight. Rockwell had hired Sam Calder, an artist friend who went into photography.

One day, Sam called me and said, "Norman wants to see that *Uncle Remus* painting you have of his." So, the next day, Sam and I took the painting to the Art Institute, up three flights, opened the door, and there sat the great artist at his easel. An agent from Brown & Bigelow and Joe Magnani, the lead painting instructor at Otis Art Institute, were also in the room. Norman was working on three small paintings for the Brown & Bigelow calendar—four boys playing sports: golf, baseball, football, and basketball. Sam and I walked in the room with my Rockwell painting and showed it to Norman, who was very pleased at seeing it again. The painting instructor said, "Norman, you should do more work like this. This is beautiful." Norman then turns to me and says, "Would you sell me the painting?" I must have stammered around and finally said, "Gee this is the only painting of yours I have. To which he replied, "Well, this summer I'll be doing some sketches for some clients and how about I trade one of my oil sketches for that one." I said absolutely... as long as I had an original Rockwell, that's all that mattered

to me. But at the end of the summer, he said all of the oil sketches he had done had been snatched by the art directors. So, *Uncle Remus* stayed with me for 50 more years.

That summer Norman taught an illustration class and, of course, I was in attendance. He recognized that I was pretty far along with my professional training. The first assignment he gave us was Ernest Hemingway's story, "The Killers." I thought what a strange assignment for Norman Rockwell to give the class. As much as I loved Rockwell and his art, as everybody did, I knew that I could never do that kind of art.

My hero at the time was Robert Fawcett and people like Stan Galli and Fred Ludekens. So I did my assignment in a Fawcett treatment. Rockwell noted this and said, "I'll tell you what, I'll give you the Robert Fawcett Famous Artists book for the summer and let you study that." (This was the year the Famous Artists' School was launched.) The book was fabulous and was my introduction to how an illustrator actually produced a piece of art, and that whole series was wonderful. I bought all 12 of them in 1979 from an artist who took the course here in Los Angeles. I got Harold von Schmidt, Jon Witcomb, and Steven Dohanos to sign my books—I had sent loose pages from the binders back to Walt Reed—he knew the artists, so he had them autographed for me. Rockwell and I became friends that summer. We met frequently for lunch in the park that separated the building where I worked and his studio. We'd sit down on the grass and eat sandwiches and talk about art. He was that open and gentlemanly and easy to talk to.

Dan: This was around 1948–49?

Bill: It was 1949. During that summer, Rockwell produced two *Post* covers. One was the cover of the moving van in the alley being blocked by a little bulldog. A group of people was surrounding the dog and others were looking out their second-story windows. Sam Calder then photographed the scene in the alley.

That summer I was able to follow Rockwell—I was never in the studio to watch him paint but, Sam would call and say, "Norman's coming over with a sketch or a drawing." He would arrive with a large preliminary charcoal sketch and Sam would photograph it. What's interesting about the bulldog painting is that I've seen quite a few Rockwell exhibits, but this painting has never been in any of them. Rockwell had Sam enlarge the photograph to the size that he wanted to paint the cover, which was probably 36" x 30". He mounted the photograph of the charcoal drawing on a masonite panel, and did the finished painting on that photograph. Rockwell said later when he brought it over that it was the worst experience he ever had painting a cover because it was like painting with butter on porcelain. It just drove him crazy. But, of course, the painting would be drying in stages as he worked, but painting it must've been a real pain in the beginning.

Rockwell was always experimenting in some way, thinking this would possibly speed up his deadline with the *Post*. My feeling is that somewhere along the way that painting self-destructed. I can just imagine the photograph coming free of the board that it was mounted on and the painting cracking. I suspect that marvelous artwork has not survived.

Everyone in that painting was either a student at Otis Art Institute or personnel. Joe Magnani, artist and painting instructor at Otis, is leaning out the window with his brush pointing at the dog. So, he selected people he knew that were all around him at that time. The other painting he produced that summer was the TV man balanced atop a steeply peaked roof of a Victorian house installing the TV antenna. That original painting is here in the L.A. County Art Museum. Just beautiful! When I was in New York I had gone down to Philadelphia to show my work to the *Post*, and in the lobby they always displayed the two current *Post* covers. One of my favorites was the old rancher sitting on the running board of a car, seeing his young boy off to college. That was so full of color and impressionistically painted, though when you see the reproduction, it looks very detailed.

When Norman and I talked during our brown-bagging lunches in the park, he said, "If you want to be an illustrator, you have to go to New York. There's just no magazine work here on the coast, and that's where your best opportunities are." So after three years, I took off for New York City. I sold my car and had $600 to my name. God, what a courageous kid I was!

Dan: It must have been scary.

Bill: I had a friend, Ralph Ball, who had worked with Haddon Sundblom, the great Coca-Cola artist, as a mechanical paste-up designer. He said that he had a huge ad all pasted up for delivery the next morning and in walked Sundblom, who was quite drunk that morning. He picked up Ralph's water bowl and threw it all over his artwork. What could he say? Sundblom was the boss. I always thought that was fascinating.

But Ralph gave me some good advice. He said, "When you get to New York, stay at the YMCA on 34th Street. It's cheap, it's central, and it will give you the chance to determine the area where you want to live." This was in January 1952 and it was COLD. Being a California boy, I didn't know what that kind of cold was like! My dad gave me his 1930 overcoat to take with me.

The first person I called in New York was Rockwell to see if I could come up and show him my samples. He agreed. He was living in Arlington, Vermont at the time. I jumped on the train at Grand Central the next morning and took it up to Troy, New York, and transferred to the Rutland Vermont Railway, which was a little narrow gauge train. It was snowing in Arlington and the countryside was just beautiful. Norman's son Tommy met me at the train station and took me directly to Rockwell's studio. Norman was waiting at the door for us. What a wonderful greeting.

He was working on a *Post* cover which depicted the interior of a veterinarian's office with dogs and their owners. Norman asked me what I thought about the coffee table in the picture. I said, "Oh, it looks great." Everything he did looked great to me. He said, "You know, I have some doubts about it." In the final picture he took it out.

Sgt. Preston of the Yukon, 1953. Gouache on board, 10" x 13".

King of the Royal Mounted, 1953. Gouache on board, 11" x 14.75".

Rockwell looked through my portfolio. I had flown 3,000 miles to show him my work and I can't remember what he said. I do remember that he gave me the names of about a half dozen people to see in New York City. One was *Boy's Life*. As it turned out, *Boy's Life* and the artists' reps Rockwell recommended all turned me down. I was disappointed but not discouraged. I had spent about a half hour with this great man when the *Post* called, likely pushing him on deadline. Lying in bed that night, I realized I had just received advice from America's greatest illustrator.

The next morning I went back to New York and found a room on 85th Street near Riverside Drive. The building, designed by the turn-of-the-century architect Stanford White, had been converted to a rooming house which had an east and a west wing. Each apartment had 10 rooms and 10 interesting people, and I had an instant family.

The first thing I did was to buy a drawing board, get some lights, and pick up the yellow pages. For some reason I decided that I would freelance instead of working in a studio, because that's what all the famous artists did. I looked up all the publishers starting with *Collier's* on Fifth Avenue, and went up to see the director, who was very knowledgeable and pleasant. He did give me some names of people to see and told me to keep in touch.

What was amazing about that time in the '50s was that you could see every art director in town. Twenty years ago, and of course today, you aren't able to see anybody. You're told to leave your portfolio and pick it up at the end of the day. It's frustrating and time consuming.

For two months I bounced around talking to art directors and not getting any work. I wasn't discouraged because I was learning the business first hand. If they didn't have anything for me they would suggest someone else. Later, I walked into Prentice Hall on lower Fifth Avenue and the art director said, "You're the artist we've been looking for." He raced up the stairs to talk to some editors and returned with a book cover assignment for me. It paid $200—my first paycheck in New York.

Later that afternoon, I received two phone calls: one from the comic art director at Dell Publishing with a $150 comic cover assignment, and the other from *Saga* magazine with a $100 black-and-white story illustration.

Dan: So when you first came to New York you didn't have a lot of freelance work?

Bill: I didn't have a thing until Prentice Hall. I just kept punching away and eventually some doors opened. From that point on, I always had work in New York. I did the comic covers for about a year and a half: *King of the Royal Mounted*, *Red Rider*, *The Lone Ranger*, and all kinds of covers for Ed Marine. But I realized I had to make more money.

◀ *King of the Royal Mounted*, September/November 1953. Gouache on board, 13" x 16.5".

Argosy, c. 1957. Gouache on board, 24.5" x 9.75".

LOUIS L'AMOUR
Author of HONDO
A BANTAM WESTERN
GUNS OF THE TIMBERLANDS
The wide-open West in the Seventies—Clay Bell wanted just one thing: to fight Devitt to the death!

Bantam 1390

I decided to take a couple of months off and do some more samples to try to get into paperback covers. Ed Marine said he would always have work for me and was very supportive. I had already met the Dell paperback art director, Walter Brooks. The next day I got a call from Brooks, who knew that I had stopped working for Ed, and asked if I'd like to do some work for him. He told me that as long as I was working for his friend Ed, then he wasn't going to take any of Ed's artists away from him. That taught me that you have to take risks in life. If you sit around and wait for something to happen, it doesn't happen. Doors opened and I doubled my income overnight.

Then I started working for Bantam Books and Pocket Books, Inc. One of my first Bantam assignments was *The Guns of the Timberland*. I always loved that painting; I still have it.

Dan: Did the publishers usually let you keep your original artwork?

Bill: Dell would let you keep your work if you wanted it. It never occurred to me to get the art back. I only took back those that I thought would make good samples. Most publishers simply bought "reproduction rights" and returned the art to the artist. Bantam, however, retained the art and paid the "sales tax." Bantam would let me borrow any art for use as samples. I kept all the art that was given back to me, but I wish I had the foresight to have had all the art returned.

The painting I thought was one of my best covers was *The Doctor on Bean Street*, with the woman standing in front of an old London brownstone house. Everything came together for that one. I swear I had that original painting, but it's disappeared.

A friend, Gus Gazzola, at Dell Paperbacks started working as art director for *Cavalier* magazine, and he wanted me to do their first full-color spread. I did the matador piece and then continued to do more work for them. At that time I had an agent who got me my first assignment at *Argosy* magazine, and that was of the boy crawling across the desert. Sometimes the paintings would flow, but at other times it would be like trying to find my way through a maze.

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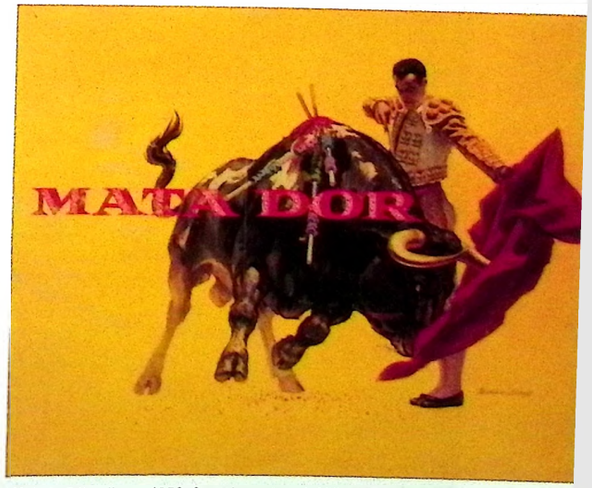

"Matador," *Cavalier*, c. 1956. Gouache on board, 25" x 15.75".

Argosy, c. 1957. Gouache on board, 24.5" x 9.75".

LOUIS L'AMOUR
Author of HONDO
A BANTAM WESTERN
GUNS OF THE TIMBERLANDS
The wide-open West in the Seventies—Clay Bell wanted just one thing: to fight Devitt to the death!

Bantam 1390

I decided to take a couple of months off and do some more samples to try to get into paperback covers. Ed Marine said he would always have work for me and was very supportive. I had already met the Dell paperback art director, Walter Brooks. The next day I got a call from Brooks, who knew that I had stopped working for Ed, and asked if I'd like to do some work for him. He told me that as long as I was working for his friend Ed, then he wasn't going to take any of Ed's artists away from him. That taught me that you have to take risks in life. If you sit around and wait for something to happen, it doesn't happen. Doors opened and I doubled my income overnight.

Then I started working for Bantam Books and Pocket Books, Inc. One of my first Bantam assignments was *The Guns of the Timberland*. I always loved that painting; I still have it.

Dan: Did the publishers usually let you keep your original artwork?

Bill: Dell would let you keep your work if you wanted it. It never occurred to me to get the art back. I only took back those that I thought would make good samples. Most publishers simply bought "reproduction rights" and returned the art to the artist. Bantam, however, retained the art and paid the "sales tax." Bantam would let me borrow any art for use as samples. I kept all the art that was given back to me, but I wish I had the foresight to have had all the art returned.

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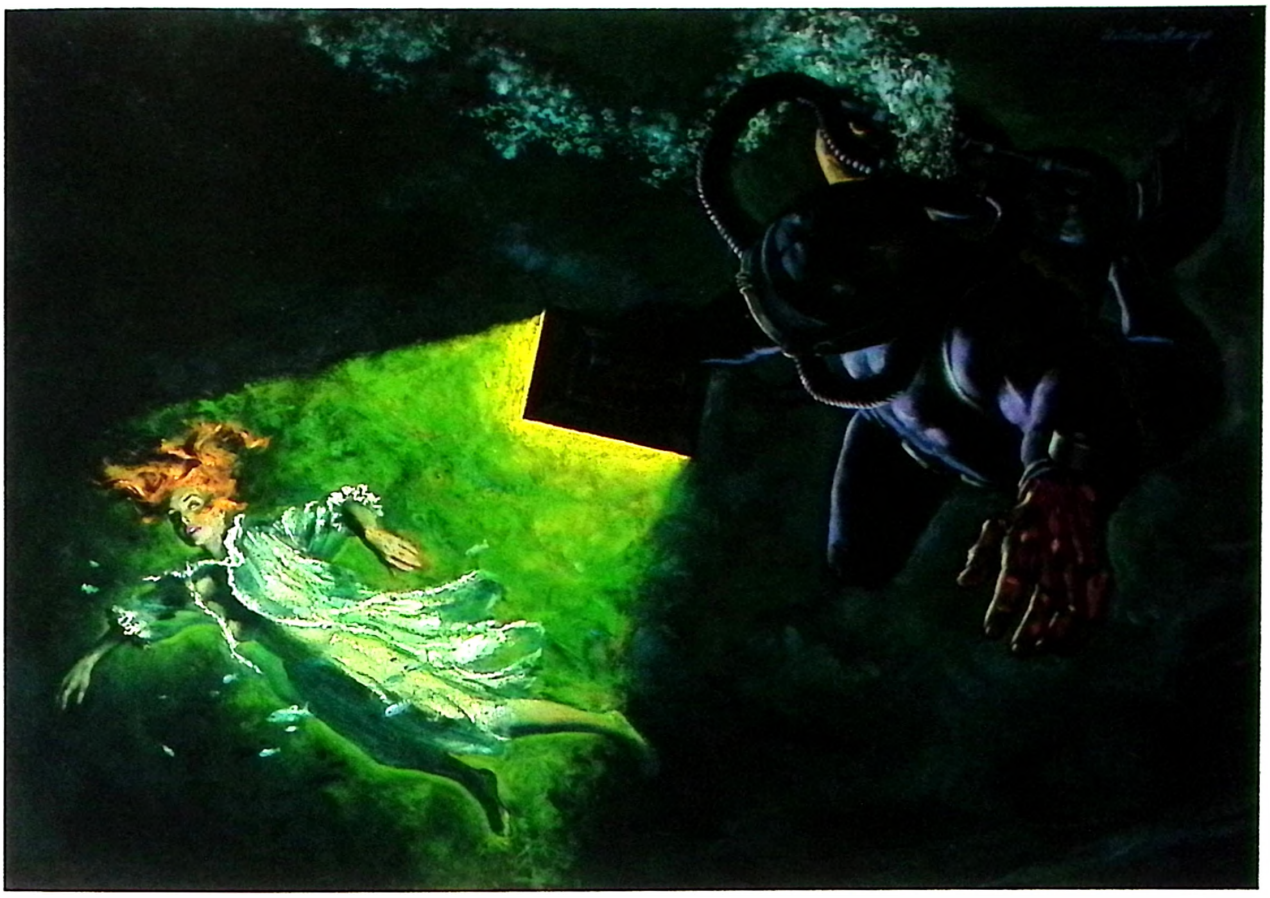
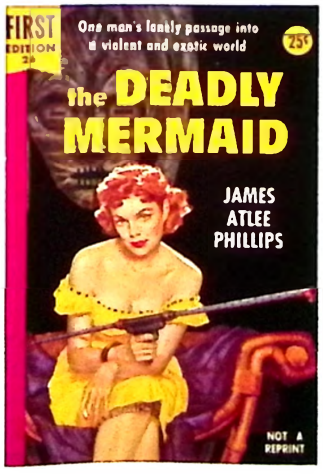
William George



"The Deep Dive," *Argosy*, c. 1957. Gouache on board, 25" x 18".

Bantam was patient with me on that painting, and I stayed up all night repainting and making adjustments, and it finally worked. When you struggle through the maze and find those solutions that push you along, it's very rewarding. I finished at 3 a.m., and I was so stimulated that I started another painting which I did in a linear style, Bob Peak-fashion. I finished that painting and took the two to Len Leoni at Bantam. He chose the first one.



Dan: It seems like many of your painting are so effortless—they just flow.

Bill: They may look that way, but they don't always flow. Another painting that I anguished over was the train that's racing off the track. The same thing happened there. I went up to see Dave Jonas again at his apartment, and he told me that I should tip the train a little bit. I had painted it at a perfect profile coming off the track. As soon as he said that, I made a quick pencil sketch. That was the answer! I couldn't get home quick enough to finish the illustration.

Some of the paintings I struggled with turned out to be my strongest. Another one I agonized over was an *Argosy* painting depicting the body of the undersea woman and the diver. The title of the story was "The Deep Dive." The art director, Bernie White, had approved a sketch with the diver at the bottom of the illustration, turning and pointing his lantern; at the top of the painting was the woman. I hated what it was doing. "This is just terrible," I thought. The composition looked like a fried egg with these figures circling around it. The lantern became the focal point.

I took it down to Dave. The artwork was due the next morning and I was going crazy. He and his wife Myra invited me to dinner and the three of us threw verbal darts at my painting until 10:00 p.m. with no solution in sight. I told them I'd better leave and battle it out myself when Myra suggested turning the painting upside down. When I did that, suddenly, the body of the woman began to look like she was actually floating in the water. I instantly got the idea of having the diver come toward the viewer and this gave the painting dynamics.

I got home about 11:00 p.m. and worked all night to finish it. The next morning when I took the painting in, Bernie

◀ *The Deadly Mermaid*, c. 1954. Gouache on board, 10.25" x 16.75".

Boxers, a portfolio sample, c. 1954. Gouache on board, 21" x 15.5".

looked at it and told me to tighten it up a little. "Just a little too painterly." The figure of the diver wasn't quite finished, but it only took about two hours to clean it up. He sent the painting to the Illustrators Show. Again, this is another example of almost killing yourself on a job that comes out a winner.

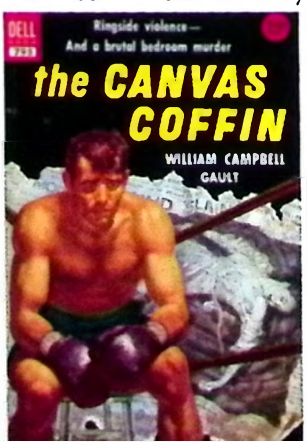
Around 1956 I felt the need to establish a signature technique of my own. I wanted people to be able to identify a William George painting. I thought if I could talk to some successful illustrators, they could give me a place of focus.

One of the guys I worked with, Vince Mancini, had an agent who also represented Robert Fawcett. He lived in Westport, Connecticut, where several significant illustrators resided. He made arrangements for me to meet with Austin Briggs at the Westport Illustrators Club where I had a couple of Bantam covers on exhibit. I met Briggs, who was in the bar with Noel Sickles. They both gave me positive feedback, but it was difficult for me to get my thoughts together in that setting. Briggs was charming and full of fun, but I remember that Sickles seemed rather cynical about the business.

About a month later I was doing some research on Old Ironsides in Boston for an illustration in *Cavalier* magazine. I called Austin Briggs as I was driving through Connecticut and asked if I could stop and visit him at his studio. Briggs said he was very busy and hung up. I thought he was angry with me, but the next morning he called and apologized and said he was trying to finish a painting and didn't want to talk to anyone, which was something I certainly understood.

I talked to him about how I struggled with using color and that I was searching for ways to be unique. He was most gracious and offered to send me the book on color from the Famous Artists School.

The next well-known artist I met was Al Dorne, whose rep had arranged a meeting. Dorne lived in a penthouse atop a 13-story apartment building on 57th Street. I walked



◀ Dell 795

The Canvas Coffin, c. 1954. Gouache on board, 10.75" x 16.5".

into the building with my portfolio and the doorman asked who I wanted to see. He allowed me to go into an elevator and when it reached the top, the door opened directly into Dorne's apartment. I had heard horror stories about Dorne's blistering temper and how I would have to walk on eggs around him. But in contrast to the stories, he was the nicest gentleman you could ever imagine. He took me out into his studio which had a 20-foot ceiling and a mezzanine overlooking 57th Street and uptown New York City. He showed me his drawing board and all his painting accoutrements; everything was pristine and orderly. By this time he was the exclusive director of the Famous Artists School. Suddenly, a woman appeared on the mezzanine and began barking orders to him. He looked at me and shrugged, then to her and said, "Alright dear." I thought it was fascinating to see these famous people and the way they were in everyday situations.

Dorne took me into a room which was dedicated to his scrap file. He hired people to scrap magazines of every description. If he needed pictures of anything, he could put his fingers right on it. He must have had about 10-12

Argosy, c. 1958. Gouache on board, 16" x 16.75".

large metal files in that room all alphabetized. He liked my *Guns of the Timberlands* cowboy painting that I had done for Bantam. Later that day, he took me to the Oak Room at the Plaza Hotel where I enjoyed a fabulous lunch with this renowned and kind illustrator.

Frank McCarthy and Bob Peak worked at Chaite Studios, which was just around the corner from me, so I went over to see Frank one afternoon. He had a room to himself on the fourth floor of that building. He showed me everything he was working on, and I loved conversing with him. I used to run into him frequently in New York because we were always working for the same publishers.

Around that time, I decided to take a trip across the country. I bought a station wagon and was determined to camp whenever I could. I went to Chicago and headed west to the Black Hills and Jackson Hole, Wyoming, the Grand Tetons, and Yellowstone Park. I had seen the movie *Shane*, which inspired me to see this country. That movie was always in the back of my mind because I couldn't believe that mountains like that existed in America. I went on up to Glacier National Park, then west to Seattle and down the Washington, Oregon, and California coast to San Francisco. I visited friends there and then went south to Torrance where I persuaded my brother Ralph to travel with me to Mexico City.

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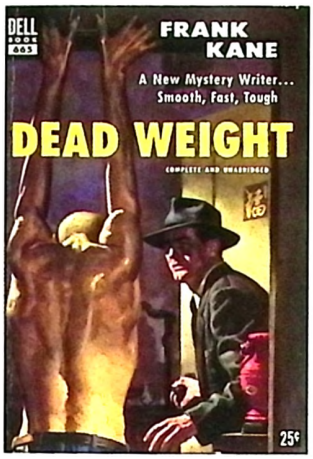
Dell 814

William George



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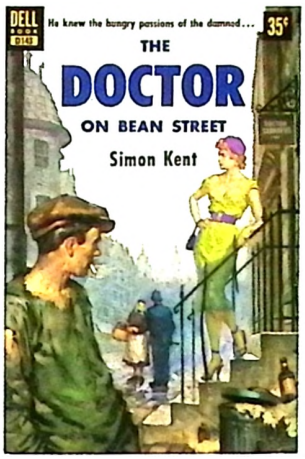

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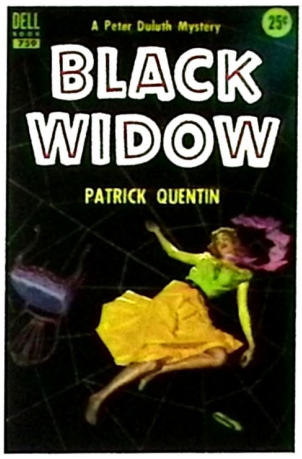

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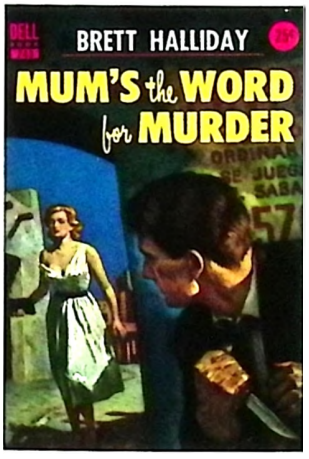

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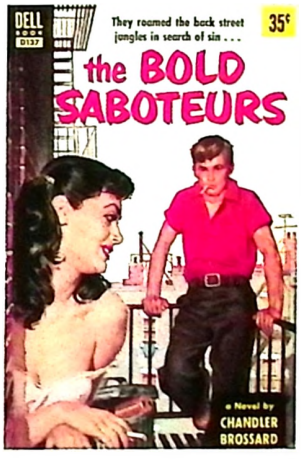


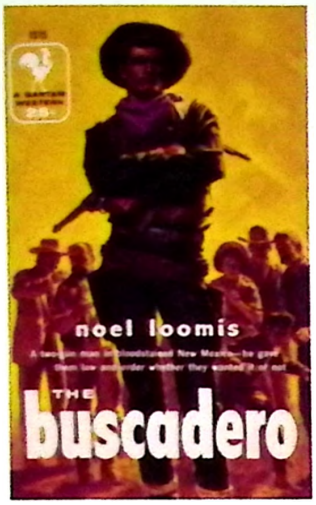
Dell D137

Dell 893

Dan: How were you able to get away for so long?
Bill: I took four months off. I told my clients that this was something I had to do, and they were willing to accommodate me.
Dan: You had saved up some money?
Bill: The whole trip cost around $1,400; I had about $5,000 saved, which was enough for me to live comfortably.

During the trip through Helena, Montana, an interesting idea occurred to me. I realized I was passing ranches but I wasn't really seeing the country. I drove down a dirt lane off the main highway toward a sheep ranch and followed the signs that warned "NO TRESPASSING." I drove until I saw a house where a man and his son were working on a wall. I told them I was an artist from New York and I had never seen the country before. I wanted to talk to someone about what it was like living in the West. He invited me to dinner and offered to put me up. Amazing Western hospitality! I stayed with them for five days. He leased 5,000 acres from the Blackfoot Indian Nation. He said he was going to bring down sheep from the hills of the Rockies. He had four or five sheep herders working for him. At five the next morning we were up in the hills meeting the sheep herders in their trailer-like homes and we started bringing down sheep that were supposed to go to market. That was quite an experience. He and his wife had four kids, the oldest boy was 17 and they could do everything on the ranch from milking cows to driving tractors. His wife was pregnant and she cooked and baked pies all day for the family and the sheepherders. What a remarkable saga of life out West.
Dan: So a lot of the trip you were by yourself?
Bill: Yes. I tried to get a friend to quit his job and go with me, but he couldn't. He told me he was going to get married. I would've enjoyed the trip more, but it was a great trip anyway. My brother and I had a lot of fun on the way to Mexico City and back. I dropped him off in San Antonio and I continued through the South on the way home to New York.
Dan: Did you do a lot of drawing and painting while you were on the trip?
Bill: Because I loved Fawcett's work so much, I had taken some reproductions of his with me and had been doing copies of them on the trip, just to get a feel of his composition and method of drawing. In the long run, I realized you

◀ *Haunted Lady*, c. 1954. Gouache on board, 12.75" x 17.5".



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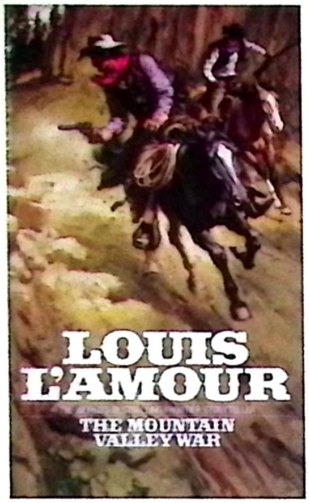
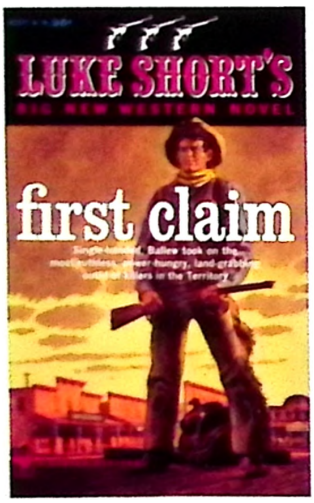


Bantam 13799-9

WILLIAM PORTER
They were closer than brothers but one believed in judges and juries -- the other made his own law with a gun
THE LAWBRINGERS

Bantam 1794

Bantam AT875



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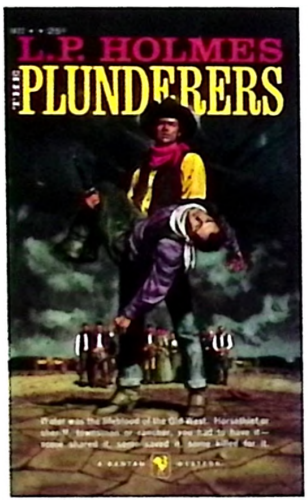

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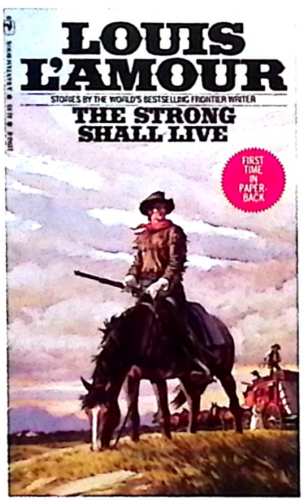


Bantam 13561-9

SLIM
BY WILLIAM WISTER HAINES
THE FAMOUS FIRST NOVEL THAT CATAPULTED WILLIAM WISTER HAINES INTO THE FRONT RANK OF AMERICAN STORYTELLERS

Bantam F1902

couldn't be somebody else. I had to keep pushing to find out what I wanted to do on my own. I wish I had copied these illustrators' paintings when I was young. I feel I could have learned a great deal. Years later, I would go to our local museum and copy paintings by William Merrit Chase and John Singer Sargent. We all need mentors.

When I went back to New York, I moved out to Long Island. All the prominent illustrators lived away from the City, so I rented a converted barn in the country. I soon realized how awfully lonely it was out there. My only socializing was playing kickball with the neighborhood kids and playing golf and tennis. In retrospect I realized that if you were a painter, wonderful artistic opportunities existed on the island. But I was an illustrator, not a painter. Fine art was a million miles from where my mindset was. About eight months later I had to get back to the City where there was more activity and where the girls were.

I'm telling you all my frustrations here. William A. Smith was one of my favorite artists and he was only 27 when he hit the big time at the *Post*. Now I really wanted to get in the *Post*. *The Saturday Evening Post* represented the pinnacle of success for illustrators. In 1960 I journeyed to Philadelphia again to see Frank Kilker, A.D. at the *Post*. He promised he would send me work soon, but I never heard from him. (Little did I realize those familiar magazines were in their death throes.) I continued working on paperback covers for *Argosy*, *Cavalier*, and advertising art. Around 1960 I wondered about my illustration future in New York. I decided to go back to Torrance, California for a month and play golf with my brother and escape emotionally from the tension and competitiveness I had been feeling in New York.

While I was in California, I was offered a job to work at a studio in Los Angeles. I thought perhaps this was what I needed; just do the work that sales people brought to me. I notified my clients in New York that I had moved to Los Angeles, and they agreed to send me work.

"Calamity Jane," *Argosy*, May 1958. Gouache on board, 19.25" x 14.25". ➤

Portrait of Ursula Andress, as seen in the movie *Four for Texas*, 1963. Oil on canvas, 30" x 40".

I was fine working there until the politics in the studio started driving me nuts and I decided to leave. The financial breaks weren't there either as compared to what I was getting as a freelancer. So I decided to freelance again. That was one of the best moves I ever made. The work began to roll in and I was now making more money in California.

The trend in art in the '60s was toward a looser and freer painting style. Bernie White told me when I did the last art for *Argosy* to loosen up the painting more than I had done in the old days. So I took that illustration and really let it rip! I was very happy with the finished painting and thought my illustration was the best in that issue.

In 1963 I received a call late in the week from the producer-director, Robert Aldrich, who said he needed an oil portrait painted over the weekend. On Friday I received the photo and necessary canvas size. On Monday I delivered the painting. When Aldrich looked at the painting, he said, "This is sensational! Where were you when we were shooting *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?*" (Bette Davis and Joan Crawford). My painting was to hang on the set of the movie *Four for Texas* with Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, and Ursula Andress, filmed at Warner Bros.

A week later I bumped into the assistant producer, Walter Blake, and he asked me if I could paint nudes. This was their problem: they had commissioned the illustrator Ben Stahl, who painted in a somewhat French impressionist style, to paint a nude of Ursula Andress, which was similar to Manet's *Olympia*. Aldrich felt the result was not suitable for their tongue-in-cheek Western, and thus contacted me for a classic style painting which was to hang over the bar in one of the scenes.

Bill's portrait of Ursula Andress is mistakenly credited to Ben Stahl in this spread from *Playboy*, July 1966.

They had flown Stahl and his wife from Florida for a big publicity press opening at Warner Bros. and paid him $5,000. I was to receive $2,500. Meanwhile, they set me up in a large room at the studio for the re-do. Their concern was whether or not Ursula would agree to pose for another photo shoot as she had for Stahl. They suggested I hire another model just for the figure, which I did.

Walter and I were waiting in the room for Ursula to show. The stagehands had built a set with a four-poster bed for her to pose on, and I was nervous as hell. Meanwhile, Walter was telling me fascinating stories about actresses and actors he had worked with. He was about 55 years old, a small version of Ronald Coleman, an elegant, sophisticated guy. He told me there were only two actors he thought were perfect to work with: Spencer Tracy and Bette Davis. They knew their lines, were never temperamental, and were always on time. They were always professional.

Finally, Ursula walked in and my knees buckled. I had never seen a woman with so much dazzling beauty—and I had known many beautiful women. Walter and Ursula's friend left and Ursula immediately disrobed. Just like that! She was very cooperative and professional in every way. She just insisted that I give her the negatives and the prints. A reproduction of the finished painting in its gaudy ornate gold frame appeared in a book entitled *Kitsch*, which translates to "Bad Art on Purpose." So much for recognition.

Warner Bros. contacted me again to discuss six additional paintings that would be used as special effects on the screen. Meanwhile, they had negotiated with Emil Kosa, a noted painter who had received an Academy Award for his special-effect paintings for the movie *Cleopatra* with Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton. Apparently they were uncertain as to whether Kosa understood what they needed, so I was to receive one of the assignments. Kosa and I showed up to view the film daily's. I'm introduced simply as a photographer. The flamboyant framed painting of Ursula is leaning against the wall and Walter explains to Kosa its purpose in the film. Kosa said, "Isn't that awful!" I turned crimson. Walter shrugs and winks at me. Kosa and I adjourn to the viewing room and I'm steaming. I'm determined to paint my critic into the toilet.

Back in my studio I lay out my picture plan. It's a wharf scene, smoking steam boats, a kaleidoscope of people in 1870's costumes milling about, horses, wagons, men pushing bales of cotton, and prostitutes hanging out of windows. I'm painting in the manner of Noel Sickles in colored inks on 30" x 40" illustration board.

After two weeks, Walter called and insisted on my bringing the painting down to the sound stage immediately, even though it wasn't quite finished. When I get there, "Big Bob" leaves the set, looks at the painting, and exclaims, "God Damn! That is absolutely sensational!" I think I levitated about two feet.

Somewhat confused, I asked Walter "What happened with Kosa?" "Don't ask" he says. But I insisted he show me his efforts, which turned out to look like the work of a first year art student. Sweet revenge!

Another incident occurred with the Ursula nude painting. *Playboy* did a spread of Ursula and her husband, John Derek, who was an actor and professional photographer. In the article, they reproduced my painting but gave credit to Ben Stahl. I wrote *Playboy* pointing out their error and explaining the situation to them. *Playboy* printed my letter, in which I was trying to be diplomatic, beneath the picture along with an abrasive, caustic letter from Ben Stahl's attorney saying how insulting it was for his client's name to be attached to such an ugly painting. *C'est la vie*!

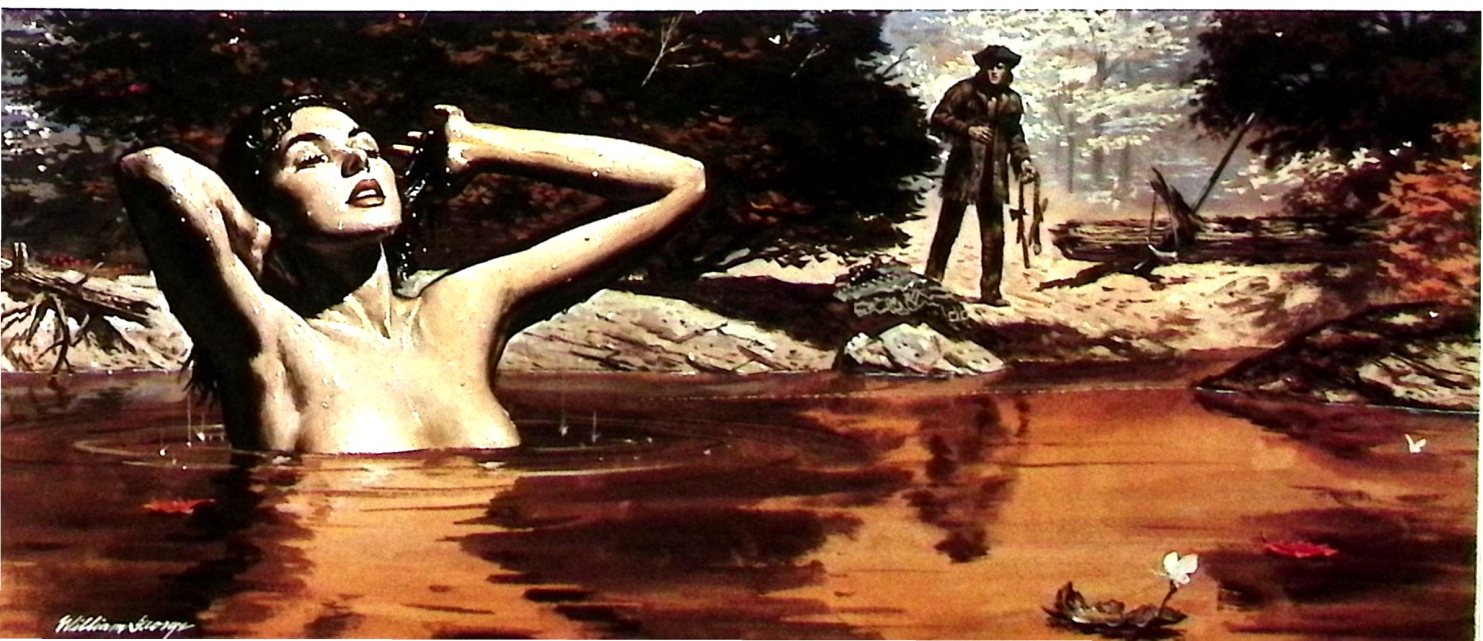
Later I did paintings for the set of *Hush, Hush, Sweet Charlotte* with Olivia de Havilland, Bette Davis, and Joseph Cotton. I told Olivia de Havilland that I had been in love with her as a kid. I had several other possible movie projects that would have been lucrative, but they ultimately fell through. That was the end of my movie painting career.

I did a lot of Mattel toy art in the '60s and '70s in addition to calendar art for The Fluor Corporation. Then in 1974, I picked up cover art for Bantam Books again. I hadn't worked for them since 1965. I had been relieved not to be doing the paperback covers at that time because I had been so busy with other work.

Dan: Advertising work probably paid a lot more.

Bill: Exactly. In 1974, I spoke with Len Leoni, A.D. at Bantam

BELOW: *Adventure*, c. 1955. Gouache on board, 22.5" x 11". Modeled by actress Carmen Phillips.

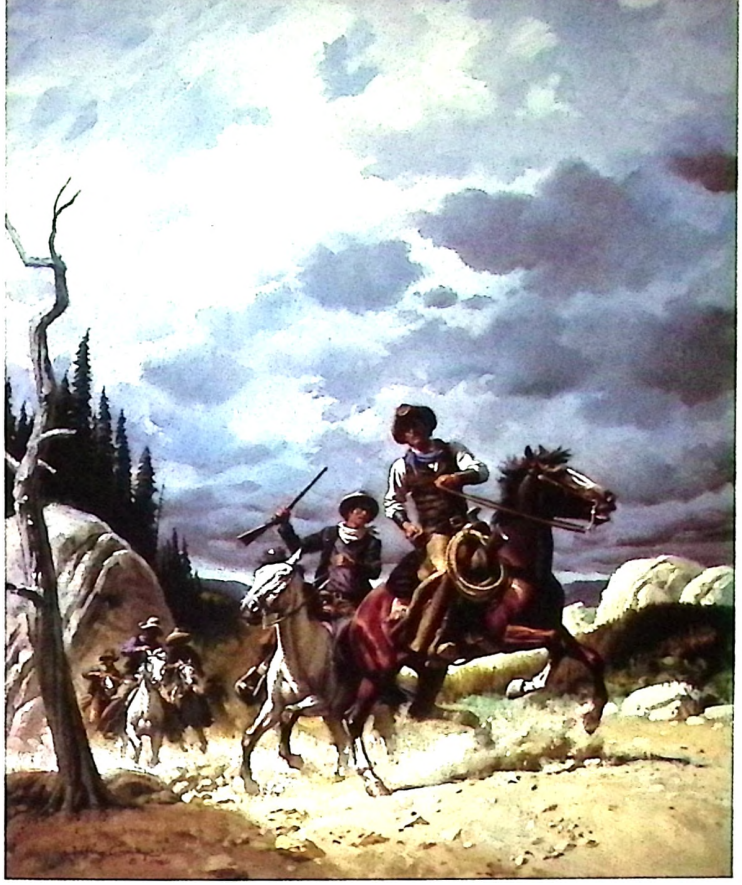


Apache Band, c. 1989. Oil on canvas, 24" x 30". Originally created as a paperback cover illustration for Zane Grey's, *The Heritage of the Desert*.

Books, and he told me they were looking for someone who could paint Frederick Remington/Charlie Russell style art. So I started doing the Louis L'amour book covers for them; the first one was *The Californios*. I sent the framed paintings to New York. When they informed me that all they needed was an 8" x 10" reproduction color transparency of the art, that made it easy, so I did a lot of Western covers for them. They only paid $450 a cover back in the '60s, and they told me I was one of their highest paid illustrators. So, now eight years later, I'm told by Len that all they will pay is $500. I agreed because I could keep the original art and sell it in art galleries for four or five times that figure. I finally got Bantam Books up to $1,000.

I remember doing a cover for Bantam, one of the few times they nailed me with a deadline, which was a night scene of cowboys coming up a draw. I decided that I was going to paint a real Remington green sky like his incredible night pictures. The painting started out well, but I began to have problems with it. I couldn't understand why, because I had a lot of Remington examples in front of me, but I couldn't pull it off. Bantam produced the painting, but it was one of my weaker covers and I couldn't send it to a gallery. After two months, I looked at it again believing that with a fresh eye I could resolve my dilemma, but it didn't happen. In my frustration I painted it as a daytime scene. Eureka! That painting became one of my best. I sold it then to Ballentine Books and the original in Wyoming.

The Western market had really taken off at that time in the '70s. I had a gallery in Scottsdale, Arizona and Jackson, Wyoming. I was energized when I realized I could sell my paintings in galleries. I placed one of my Western Bantam covers in the gallery in La Jolla and the dealer, Doug Jones, told me the painting sold to a young couple who didn't have the money to purchase it, but wanted it so badly they went out and got a loan in order to buy it. That truly touched me. That is so different from working with corporate America.



Cimmaron Thunder, c. 1979. Oil on canvas, 24" x 30".

The Unseen Enemy, c. 1989. Oil on canvas, 24" x 30".

I could paint anything I ever wanted. In commercial art, I had always stayed abreast of the new styles and techniques that came along, but I said the hell with that airbrush stuff. I had done a lot of illustrations for Mattel and Hasbro Toy in the '80s and early '90s.

In 1983, Mattel asked me to paint a science fiction subject on canvas. That was the beginning of a long series of paintings for the *Masters of the Universe* toy box art in addition to line art posters. The assignment was very lucrative and the *Masters* line became the world's most popular toy until competitive toy companies began duplicating the action figures. Now it's totally gone to photography and computer art.

I think of Stan Zuckerberg, an outstanding oil painter and a major star in the paperback world of the 1950s. I saw so much of his work at Bantam Books and was always impressed with his paintings. What a giant! He and Jim Avati. Meltzoff was also a great paperback artist and illustrator. Later I heard that Zuckerberg died in New Jersey, practically starving to death. I remember an incident when I was doing all these paintings for Bantam Western covers and Zuckerberg had brought in a painting in the '70s and was struggling with a Western assignment. So they told him to paint like Bill George. Bizarre! Zuckerberg was painting a lot of wharf scenes and fishermen up in New England in the late '60s. But something was amiss; that marvelous quality of art.

Dan: It seems like a lot of artists lose it at some point.

Bill: I know what you mean. Some artists never lose it, they continually get better. To see someone like Tom Lovell take hold in the Western art market and go off like gangbusters; and John Clymer, also, became an important artist. He produced some amazing paintings up into his 80s. But Tom, before he died, I could see he was starting to have some difficulties.

When you think of someone like Maxfield Parrish, 96 years old, still creating art as skillful as he was when he was 50. Amazing!

Dan: Was it hard to change mediums?

Bill: It took a while to get accustomed to painting in oil, but I took several painting classes starting in 1969. I had a woman instructor who started us out by doing still-life paintings. I wanted her to think of me as a student and not as a professional. I asked her to compose a still life on canvas for me so I could see how to paint visually instead of drawing out of my head without models. As a painter, to see something right there in front of you was such a difficult thing for me. I persevered and began to get comfortable.

In 1974, when Len Leoni asked me to do that first L'amour cover, I was feeling at ease with painting on canvas and I had a wonderful feeling of being able to paint fine art and also commercial art. I realized then that the commercial art world was just a business. I think that depressed a lot of commercial artists in New York as they saw their careers winding down. They only saw themselves as illustrators and not as ongoing artists. Some even took their own lives. When you

"The Black Hole of Calcutta," *Cavalier*, c. 1960. 24" x 16.5". Gouache on board. Bill George and artist Dave Jonas posed for most of the figures in this painting.

do a painting, you're leaving something—your footprint saying I was here.

Dan: Tell me about *The Black Hole of Calcutta.*

Bill: The "Black Hole of Calcutta" was a bare, low-ceilinged dungeon known as the Black Hole prison in the British East India Company's Fort William, intended to hold only a couple of prisoners. But on the terrible night of June 20, 1756, at the end of a four-day battle, 145 men and one woman were herded into the black hole. My cover depicts the screaming woman in the center of the painting with the crush of people around her. I got the inspiration of the woman when I saw a picture of Elizabeth Taylor in *Life* magazine from a movie called *Suddenly Last Summer*, and the picture was a full-page shot of her screaming. I thought it was perfect for the illustration. Of course, the editors received letters recognizing Elizabeth. Norman Rockwell once said, "No matter what you do, never copy anything from any source. Somebody out there is going to know it, no matter how obscure." Sure enough, they caught me!

Dan: I wanted to ask you about your record album covers.

Bill: I began doing covers for Capitol Records back at Russ Harte Studios. I did a lot of covers for Capitol, some for Warner Bros., and portraits of Frank Sinatra and a lot of musicians of the '40s and '50s. Everything was from photos; I never saw any of these people except for Charlton Heston, who wanted a large charcoal portrait of himself and his two children. He lives about two miles from me here in the Hollywood Hills. This was in 1967. His agent had called another art director that I had done some work for, and he recommended me. The agent said Charlton Heston would come to my studio to pose. Wow!

I sat Heston on a high wooden stool and put his little girl, who was five or six, on his lap, and his boy, who was 10 or 12, standing and leaning against him. They made a nice grouping. I took 24 shots of them. I couldn't get over all six feet, three inches of Moses walking through the door. He was very charming and got down on the living room floor, amidst the white hair of my cat, to look at my work. He was delighted with the finished charcoal portrait and indicated he wanted me to do some other work for him. I thought that would be great because he has a nice chiseled face that would be easy to work with.

Heston later called me about doing the gouache paintings which would be portraits of him in some of his famous roles, but at the time I was swamped with calendar paintings for The Fluor Corporation. After I told him I would charge him $450 each, the same as I charged Bantam book covers, he said, "Mm-hmm," and I never heard from him again.

Recently, I came across the photos and sent them to him along with a letter and a copy of my stagecoach painting.

I received a letter back from him saying that he and his wife were thrilled to receive the photos. I'm going to get that letter framed.

Heston is probably the only actor I worked with directly, other than Ursula Andress and Peggy Lee.

Dan: Let me ask you about other illustrators you may have known or worked with over the years.

Bill: Oh, sure. Sandy Kossin and I were in art school together. Sandy did a lot of paperback book covers. He created a remarkable spread in *Life* magazine on the Bay of Pigs invasion. He did the cover and a series of illustrations on the inside of the magazine. Strong, powerful stuff! He also did some work for the *Post, Argosy,* and *Reader's Digest.*

In 1956, Sandy, David Jonas, Vince Mancini, and I shared space on 55th Street just west of Sixth Avenue, centrally located in Manhattan. That area was a Mecca for movie stars and entertainers.

David Jonas was focused on advertising art, working somewhat like Bob Peak. After we were ensconced in our working apartment, I was amazed at David's talent—his draftsmanship was superb. Of the four of us, Dave made the most income.

Vince was a fine illustrator in a more stylized fashion. I remember one day Vinnie had staggered into our studio extremely shaken. He had been walking down Madison Avenue when a body slammed on the sidewalk 10 feet in front of him. What an incredible trauma. That finished his day. He left for home and didn't return for a week.

Most of the illustrators I knew were just acquaintances. Austin Briggs, Al Dorne, Bob Peak, Frank McCarthy, John Pike, Warren Baumgartner, Ken Riley, James Avati, and Harold von Schmid. I'd have met many more if I had joined the Society of Illustrators, but I attended many of their meetings to hear notable illustrators and see the exhibits.

Dan: How about James Bama?

Bill: No, I never met Bama. I did briefly meet R. G. Harris, the great illustrator for romance magazines, at Robert Scott Photo Studio on Madison Avenue. He lived in Westport, Connecticut. Harris, a wonderful illustrator, painted high fashion women. Everything I learned about painting beautiful women came from studying R.G. Harris illustrations. He and Al Parker moved to Phoenix in the late '50s because those men knew the magazines were in trouble. They were going to make life changes. Parker then moved to Carmel. Harris moved to Carefree, Arizona just north of Scottsdale, the capital of Western painting. Recently when I was in Arizona, I asked an art dealer if he knew R.G. Harris, and he gave me his number. I called and introduced myself as having met him at Robert Scott studios years before and he said, "You know, you're right. I don't remember that." I told him I would love to talk to him if he had the time.

I drove up through the rugged desert terrain to his magnificent home that was filled with geometric, hard-edged, non-objective art which he said he had painted himself. This was a far cry from his magazine career. We had a great discussion about illustration and illustrators. He had

The Poker Game, c. 2000. Oil on canvas, 20" x 30".

a wonderful studio and said he was currently painting mostly portraits. When I asked what had happened to his original illustrations, he said he only had one, which was hanging in the family room. He had no knowledge as to what had happened to the rest of them. He said with publishers his only concern was where's the next commission and when will I get the check.

My visit with Tom Lovell was very interesting also. He had a beautiful home in Santa Fe. When I asked him what motivated him to move out West from Connecticut, he said, "This is where the action is."

I began buying original illustrations in 1977. Dean Cornwell, Tom Lovell, Harold von Schmid, Pruett Carter—all my heroes and all oil painters. These men were inspirations to me. I wrote to Lovell and said how exciting it was to have his originals, and he said he was happy they had found a home. I sometimes wonder if Lovell and I had often been on the same elevator at the Fawcett Publishing Building on 44th Street, me going to *Cavalier* and Lovell going to *True Magazine*.

When I think back on the agonies I went through in trying to find myself as an artist, I can see now that I produced some pretty good art.

—© 2003 by Dan Zimmer

Blood Brother, c. 1956. Gouache on board, 12.75" x 21". ➤
Artists Dave Jonas and Jerry Powell posed as the cowboy and Native American.

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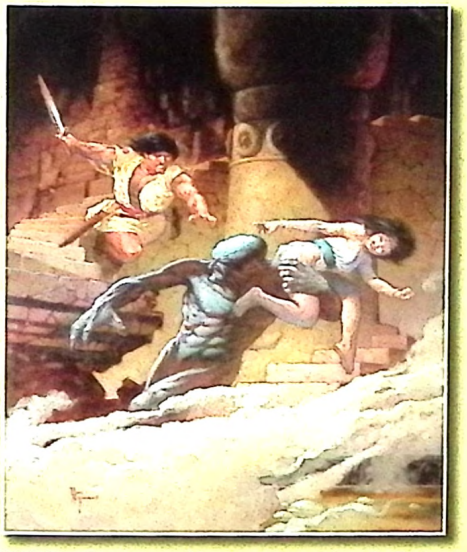

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Book Reviews

THE RED ROSE GIRLS: AN UNCOMMON STORY OF ART AND LOVE

BY ALICE A. CARTER
168 PAGES, B/W
$19.95 SOFTCOVER, $39.95 HARDCOVER
WWW.FLESKPRODUCTIONS.COM

The three artists who inhabited the picturesque estate in Philadelphia known as the Red Rose Inn during the early years of the 20th Century—Jessie Willcox Smith, Elizabeth Shippen Green, and Violet Oakley—shared a unique personal and creative alliance that helped each of them to achieve success in the otherwise male-dominated world of professional illustration. In *The Red Rose Girls: An Uncommon Story of Art and Love*, award-winning illustrator and author Alice A. Carter begins to reveal the inner workings of a decades-long friendship that, without question, allowed each woman to reach a level of accomplishment that may not have fully flourished without their circle of mutual support.

Hailing from different backgrounds yet united in their shared passion for art, the women came together at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts to study under the tutelage of the legendary illustrator Howard Pyle. At a time when art instruction for women was often found to be lacking, Smith, Green, and Oakley became some of the first female artists to achieve wealth and notoriety in the Victorian era. Yet in spite of their common interests and purpose, Carter shows that it was the women's separate artistic aspirations that made their shared household at the Red Rose Inn so dynamic—a literal and metaphoric cross-pollination of ideas and inspiration.

Jessie Willcox Smith was born on September 6, 1863 in Philadelphia. She and her siblings were reared in the middle class proprieties of Victorian society as Jessie grew into a "healthy, athletic, long-limbed, graceful" young woman. Though immortalized as a painter of children, she quit her first job as kindergarten teacher, finding her charges too boisterous and ill-mannered. And yet, as she later wrote, "I knew I wanted to do something with children, but never thought of painting them." After a brief stint as a sculptress, Jessie began her art education at Philadelphia's School of Design For Women in 1884. But its structured classes didn't hold the interest of the passionate, budding artist, and Jessie soon convinced her parents to enroll her in the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts a year later. Its tempestuous director, Thomas Eakins, whom Jessie described as a "madman," did improve her work through studying anatomy, perspective, and photography. Yet, as the author tells us: "Her own artistic vision never meshed with Eakins' insistence on rigorous confrontation with nature." Jessie stayed on after his dismissal for what was then deemed scandalous behavior, studying with Thomzas Anshuntz and James B. Kelly until her graduation in 1888.

Elizabeth Shippen Green was born September 1, 1871 into an old Philadelphia family with strong upper class connections. Elizabeth was sent to all the proper finishing schools, and, encouraged by her father, who had been a *Harper's* artist-correspondent during the Civil War, began illustrating her notebooks when she was eight years old. Ten years later, having already placed illustrations in the *Philadelphia Times*, her parents enrolled her in the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, her father's alma mater. Elizabeth was determined to become an illustrator. So, when not attending her Academy classes, she continued producing a series of weekly drawings for the *Times*. After her 1893 graduation, she established herself as a regular contributor of fashion illustrations to the Philadelphia *Public Ledger*.

Violet Oakley was born in New York on June 10, 1874. Art was, literally, in her blood: 12 of her ancestors were artists and she was encouraged to draw and paint at an early age. A somewhat sickly child, her parents kept her at home till she was 20, when they believed her strong enough to begin attending Art Student's League classes. In 1895, Violet and her sister were admitted to the Academie Montparnasse while their aunt visited family in France. She then enrolled at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, her father having moved the family to Philadelphia so a famous doctor there could attend him. Passionate, intense, and proud of her artistic heritage, Violet's sister described her as having a "perfect dragon of ambition" at the bottom of her soul.

By 1902 the trio had moved into Villanova, Pennsylvania's Red Rose Inn, a spacious English-style country estate on 200 acres. Here, their number was increased by one—the indispensable housekeeper Henrietta Cozens. As the ties between the women intensified, they began to refer to each other by pet names. Jessie Smith became Jeddy; Elizabeth Green, Liddy; and Henrietta Cozens, Heddy. They tried out Viddy for Violet—she preferred "Violet, Duchess of Oaks." Their teacher and mentor, Howard Pyle, called them the "Red Rose Girls." The artists appreciated the house more for its aesthetic value than anything else, and one year later, when the rose tree flowered into November, they rushed into the garden to photograph the late blooms. Henrietta, on the other hand, would remind them that such beauty needs tending. She was the one who did the gardening; who kept their household neat and orderly. The Red Rose Girls, while paying strict attention to their appearance, did not count vanity among their vices. Because they were often in the public eye, recognized by strangers, and photographed by the press, they were mindful of their attire and interested in fashion. Four years of idyllic, productive existence later, the artists relocated to the house and grounds of "Cogslea" at Mt. Airy, Pennsylvania, the name an acronym of its inhabitants.

Their harmonious working relationship ended in 1911, when Liddy married Huger Elliott. Violet then began her 16 year task of completing murals begun by E.A. Abbey for the Senate Chamber and Supreme Court Room in Harrisburg, and a new friendship with Edith Emerson. But, though no longer the Red Rose Girls, their productivity never flagged. Among the first female members of the Society of Illustrators (later, Hall of Fame inductees), Smith and Elliott continued

to paint the covers and fill the pages of *Collier's*, *McLure's*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Harper's Monthly*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*, not to mention Jessie Smith's book illustrations for such classics as *Mother Goose* and *The Water Babies*. Their old friend Violet, who lived until 1961, completed her epic murals.

Carefully guarded of their privacy during their lifetimes, author Carter is thus unable to comment fully on the possible romantic nature of the friendships at the Red Rose Inn. It is likely, however, that the four women actually consisted of two couples—Green and Oakley, and Smith and Cozens. Commonly referred to as "Boston marriages" during the early years of the 20th Century, this feature of their lives would cause little concern in this day and age. Carter wisely chooses to focus on the cumulative importance of the women's artistic output, and, more importantly, the way in which the three artists opened the doors for women to work and gain acceptance in the world of commercial illustration.

— J. Barry Dwyer

JOSEPH CLEMENT COLL: THE ART OF ADVENTURE

BY JOHN FLESKES
168 PAGES, B/W
$19.95 SOFTCOVER, $39.95 HARDCOVER
WWW.FLESKPRODUCTIONS.COM

"Pen and ink is not for the fumbler or the evader; the instrument reveals all."

Henry C. Pitz,
200 Years of American Illustration

Such are the words of Henry C. Pitz, illustrator and renowned scholar of Howard Pyle and the Brandywine tradition. After working as a comic book inker for several years and after teaching black-and-white illustration in a college for seven more years, all I can add is that I fully concur with the esteemed Mr. Pitz. Black-and-white art, as I tell my students, "takes no prisoners." For much of the 20th Century "fine artists" looked down on their black-and-white contemporaries—not because it was a lesser art form, but because the fine artists couldn't do it. Black-and-white art is a 180-degree twisting, mind-numbing reversal from color—dark contrasts come to the fore and lights recede into the background. Every inadequacy an artist has, whether it's anatomy or sense of design, or perspective or lack of compositional skills, is blatantly exposed to the viewer. Weaknesses cannot be hidden by a splash of color that distracts the eye. Therefore, what cannot be mastered must be dismissed because the most disconcerting, frustrating, and enlightening reality to novices and professionals alike is that "black-and-white illustration ain't as easy as it looks."

Then there's Coll.

Joseph Clement Coll, with his rapier pen and "sparkling" blacks, made it look easy. Every time I see Coll's art it elicits the same response: "Damn him!" I'll whisper with awe and affection, "Now just give me a moment to pick my chin up off the floor." It was what I said when I got *The Magic Pen of Joseph Clement Coll* by Walt Reed (long out of print and hard to find), and it was the exact same reaction I had when I opened John Fleskes' latest offering: *Joseph Clement Coll: The Art of Adventure*. Awe and affection and a bruised chin all over again.

Fleskes' first book was on the classic and elegant Franklin Booth, and now by following it up with the casual and dramatic J.C. Coll it's almost the equivalent of having Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly in the same movie. This volume contains 228 beautiful illustrations with only a small (15 percent) overlap with the Reed book. Included are images from *Sir Nigel, The Lost World, The Garden of Fate,* and many more from *the Associated Sunday Magazines*. As of this writing, Flesk Productions only has 80 copies of the hardcover and 1500 of the softcover left in stock, which attests to the demand for Coll's work. For those who haven't purchased it, get it now, and for those of you who already have... *Joseph Clement Coll, Volume II* is due out in spring of 2004.

Those who can appreciate it and know just how hard black-and-white illustrations are to produce know that the reality of Coll's art is that it is disconcerting and frustrating *but*, always, always, always enlightening, and I, for one, am glad that he "takes no prisoners."

— Brian M. Kane

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EXHIBITIONS & EVENTS

Peter Rabbit's Garden
October 11, 2003 through January 4, 2004
Royal Ontario Museum of Art

Born in London in 1866, Beatrix Potter was educated at home and became interested in drawing and painting at an early age. She kept pet animals and would sketch them as realistically as she could. What began as a picture letter for children eventually turned into a series of 23 little books, all reflecting Potter's knowledge of birds, insects, fungi, and flowers, as well as the little animals that she so keenly observed. These "little tales" have sold over 150 million copies in more than 35 languages and are still in print today. **Peter Rabbit's Garden**, a multi-media exhibition showcasing the life, literature, and art of one of the world's most renowned children's authors, was created to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the publishing of Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902) by Frederick Warne. Visitors will explore Potter's life through various multi-media components leading them to an extraordinary series of more than 40 of Potter's original artworks, some of which are extremely delicate and rarely displayed.

For more information, call: 1-416-586-5550.

An Historical Look at Visual Communication
October 20, 2003 through November 21, 2003
Richard Stockton College Art Gallery

This exhibition will include 50 works of art from the Society of Illustrator's permanent collection that spans the 20th Century (1890-1990) and examines the changing role of the illustrator. Featured artists: Harry Beckhoff, Franklin Booth, David Bowers, Arthur William Brown, Alan E. Cober, Dan Content, Mario Cooper, Floyd Macmillan Davis, Vincent Di Fate, Stevan Dohanos, Albert Dorne, Dean Ellis, Harrison Fisher, James Montgomery Flagg, Eric Fowler, Bernie Fuchs, John Gannam, Charles Dana Gibson, Max Ginsburg, Mary Grandpre, Robert Greenhalgh, Frederic Rodrigo Gruger, John Held Jr., Brad Holland, Winslow Homer, Dorothy Hood, Jean Leon Huens, Elbert McGran Jackson, Arthur Ignatius Keller, Katharine Sturges Knight, Ted Lewin, Joseph Christian Leyendecker, Orson Byron Lowell, Gerald McConnell, Robert McGinnis, Wallace Morgan, Alfred Charles Parker, Christopher Fox Payne, Robert Peak, Howard Pyle, Guy Rowe, Nancy Stahl, Alice Barber Stephens, Haddon Hubbard Sundblom, Saul Tepper, Cathleen Toelke, Robert Weaver, Albert Beck Wenzell, Jon Whitcomb, and Coby Whitmore.

For more information, call: 1-609-652-4566.

The Red Rose Girls: An Uncommon Story of Art and Love
November 8, 2003 through May 31, 2004
The Norman Rockwell Museum at Stockbridge

At a time when women were prohibited from taking life-drawing classes at most art schools, Jessie Wilcox Smith, Elizabeth Shippen Green, and Violet Oakley—who attended the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and met as Howard Pyle's students at the Drexel Institute—were encouraged in their pursuits and celebrated for their talents. Smith and Green were illustrators, collaborating on children's books and garnering lucrative assignments. Oakley was a painter and muralist of national recognition. This exhibition explores the art, lives, and times of these women, who were dubbed the "Red Rose Girls" by Howard Pyle because of the home and studio they established in a rambling structure called the Red Rose Inn.

For more information, call: 1-413-298-4100, ext. 220.

Thomas B. Allen: The Journey of an American Illustrator
October 8, 2003 - October 25, 2003
The Society of Illustrators

Thomas B. Allen has served as an illustrator for over 30 magazines including *Esquire*, *The New Yorker*, *Life*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Fortune*, and *Time*. He illustrated 17 Lester Flatt & Earl Scruggs album covers during the early heyday of country music in the 1950s and '60s. His collaboration with Earl and Louise Scruggs led to a unique mix of fine art and country music that has continued to influence both worlds. He has held teaching positions at the School of Visual Arts, Syracuse University, University of Kansas, and the Ringling School of Art and Design.

For more information, call: 1-212-838-2560.

The Art of Patrick McDonnell and *MUTTS*
December 3, 2003 through January 3, 2004
The Society of Illustrators

This is an exhibit of the work of King Features Syndicate artist Patrick McDonnell, the creator of the comic strip "Mutts." McDonnell has been the recipient of numerous awards including five Harvey Awards, the National Cartoonist Society's Rueben for Cartoonist of the Year 1999, and others. This exhibit coincides with the release of *Mutts: The Comic Art of Patrick McDonnell* by Harry N. Abrams Publishers.

For more information, call: 1-212-838-2560.

In The Next Issue...

ENOCH BOLLES

ROBERT FAWCETT

PAUL RADER

The Art of Enoch Bolles by Jack Raglin
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JESSIE WILCOX SMITH
(1863-1935)
"Checkers"
Oil & Pastel on Board, 24 x 16
Signed, Upper Left

Published in Scribner's magazine, December, 1902 as a Special Christmas Pictoral entitled "A Mother's Days" in full color, page 690.

HARVEY T. DUNN (1884-1952)
"The Homesteaders" ("On The Move")
Oil on Canvas, 27 x 40
Signed Lower Right & Dated, 1908

Published as the front cover of The Outing Magazine, *Volume 52, #4, July, 1908*

W. HERBERT DUNTON
(1878-1936)
"Badger Hole" ("The Spill")
Oil on Canvas, 28 x 20
Signed, Lower Right & Dated, 1906

Published in Cosmopolitan magazine March 1908, page 52, story illustration for "The Lecture in Lady Gay" by Alfred Henry Lewis. Exhibited National Cowboy Hall of Fame Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Reproduced as a half-page full color illustration in Julie Schimmel's University of Texas Press book The Art and Life of W. Herbert Dunton, 1878-1936, *on page 54 for the chapter 'The Wild & Romatic West.'*

FRANK E. SCHOONOVER
(1877-1972)
"Return of Ancient Otter"
Oil on Canvas, 36 x 27
Signed & Dated, Lower Right, 1917

Published in American Boy magazine, July 1918 "The White Black Foot" by James Willard Schultz. Exhibited Brandywine River Museum and New Britain Museum.

Reproduced as a full-page illustration in Courtland Schoonover's 1976 Watson-Guptill book Frank Schoonover - Illustrator of the North American Frontier, *on page 115.*

DEAN CORNWELL (1892-1960)
"Captain Blood Inspecting The Treasure Chest Jewels"
Oil on Canvas, 26 x 52
Signed, Lower Right & Dated, 1930

Published in Cosmopolitan Magazine, *July 1930 as a 2-page story illustration for "Ransom - Captain Blood" by Rafael Sabatini. Reproduced in* Dean Cornwell - Dean of Illustrators *by Patricia Broder, 1978 Watson-Guptill (also reprinted by Collector's Press, 2001.)*

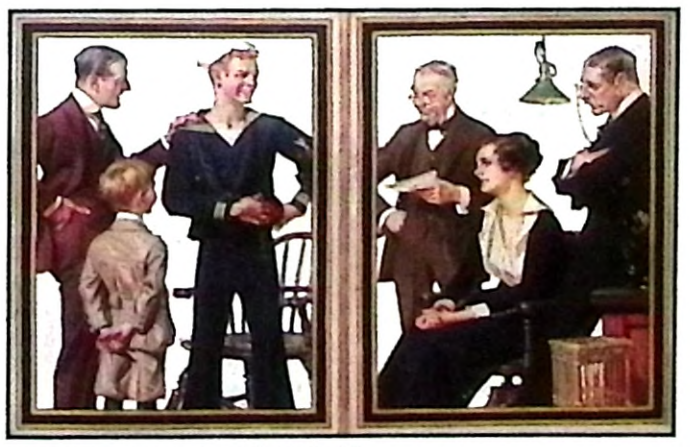
NORMAN ROCKWELL
(1894-1978)
"Al Smith was Fellowman to Every Man"
Oil on Canvas, 28 x 22
Signed, Lower Right, Circa 1945

Alfred E. Smith & The Children of the World. *Published as a unique fund raising poster for The Alfred E. Smith Memorial Hospital Fund, Empire State Building, New York, 1945. Reproduced in* Norman Rockwell - A Definitive Catalogue *by Laurie Norton Moffatt, Volume 2, 1986, page 1018, Figure #P157.*

A PRIVATE GALLERY LOCATED IN THE MIAMI—FORT LAUDERDALE METROPOLITAN REGION IS OPEN BY APPOINTMENT.

MAXFIELD PARRISH
(1870-1966)
"Autumn Brook"
Oil on Board, 11 x 9
Signed on verso, Vose Galleries label, Maxfield Parrish Jr. hand-written notes, Circa 1948.

Published as a calendar by Brown & Bigelow, St. Paul, MN. Reproduced as opening plate for Maxfield Parrish chapter in America's Great Illustrators *by Susan E. Meyer, pg. 114, Harry N. Abrams, Inc. N.Y., 1978.*



JOSEPH C. LEYENDECKER (1874-1961)
"A Proud Sailor's New Uniform"
Oil on Canvas (two sections), 22 x 48

Published in 1917 as a double 2-page ad for House of Kuppenheimer in The Saturday Evening Post *and other national magazines. Reproduced in* J.C. Leyendecker *by Michael Schau, Watson-Guptill, 1974, pages 94-95.*

HOWARD CHANDLER CHRISTY
(1873-1952)
"After the Storm"
Oil on Canvas, 40 x 30
Signed, Lower Left & Dated, 1936

CHARLES G. MARTIGNETTE

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Author of *The Great American Pin-Up* published worldwide by Benedikt Taschen Verlag, October 1996. ISBN 3-8228-8497-9

Author of *Gil Elvgren - All His Glamorous American Pin-Ups* published by Benedikt Taschen Verlag, December 1999. ISBN 3-8228-6611-3

Author of *Pin-Up /The Edward Runci Collection* published worldwide by Collector's Press, Portland, Oregon, January, 1997. ISBN 1-888054-15-8

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John Falter, *Saturday Evening Post* cover, November 9, 1957

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